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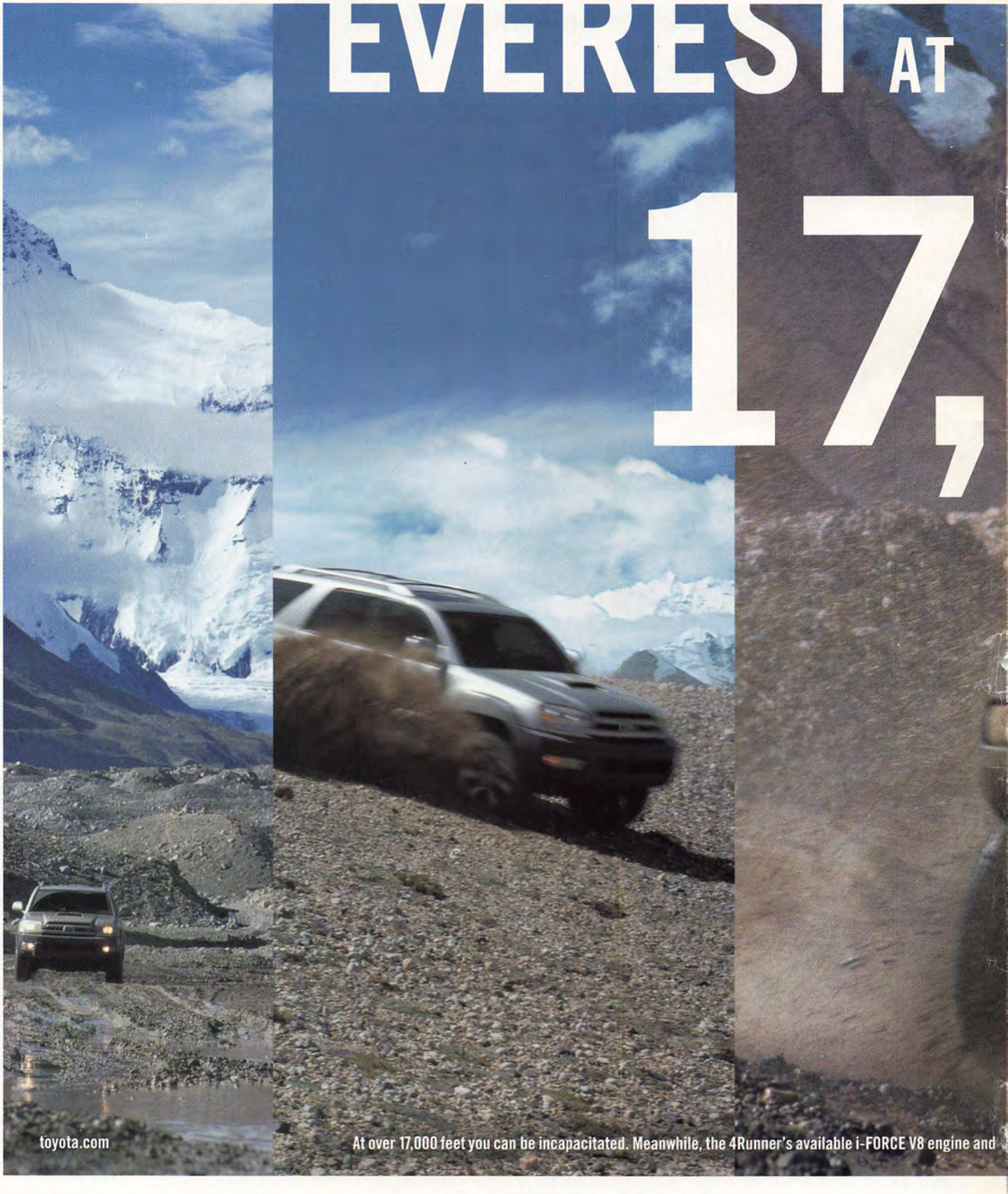
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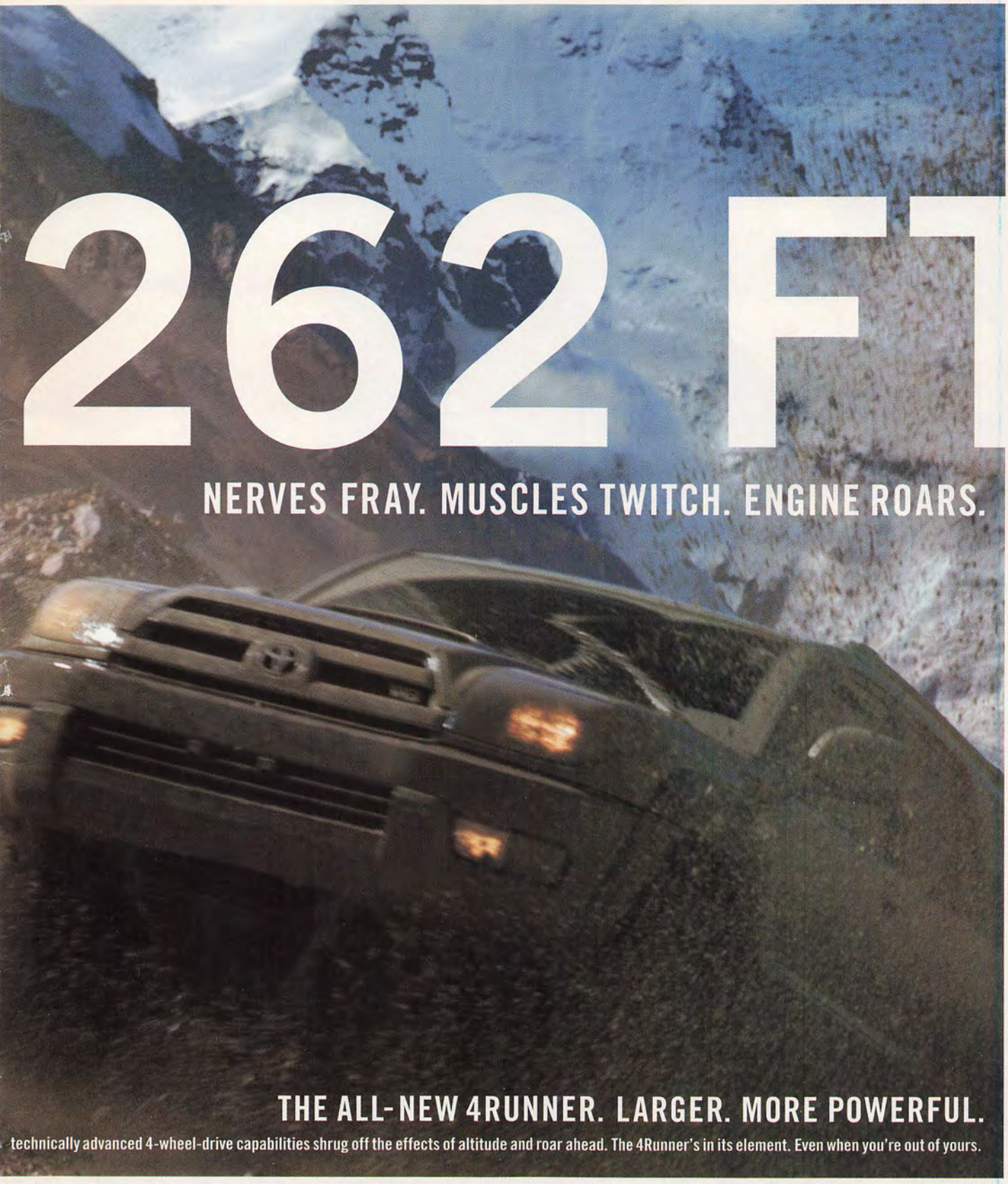
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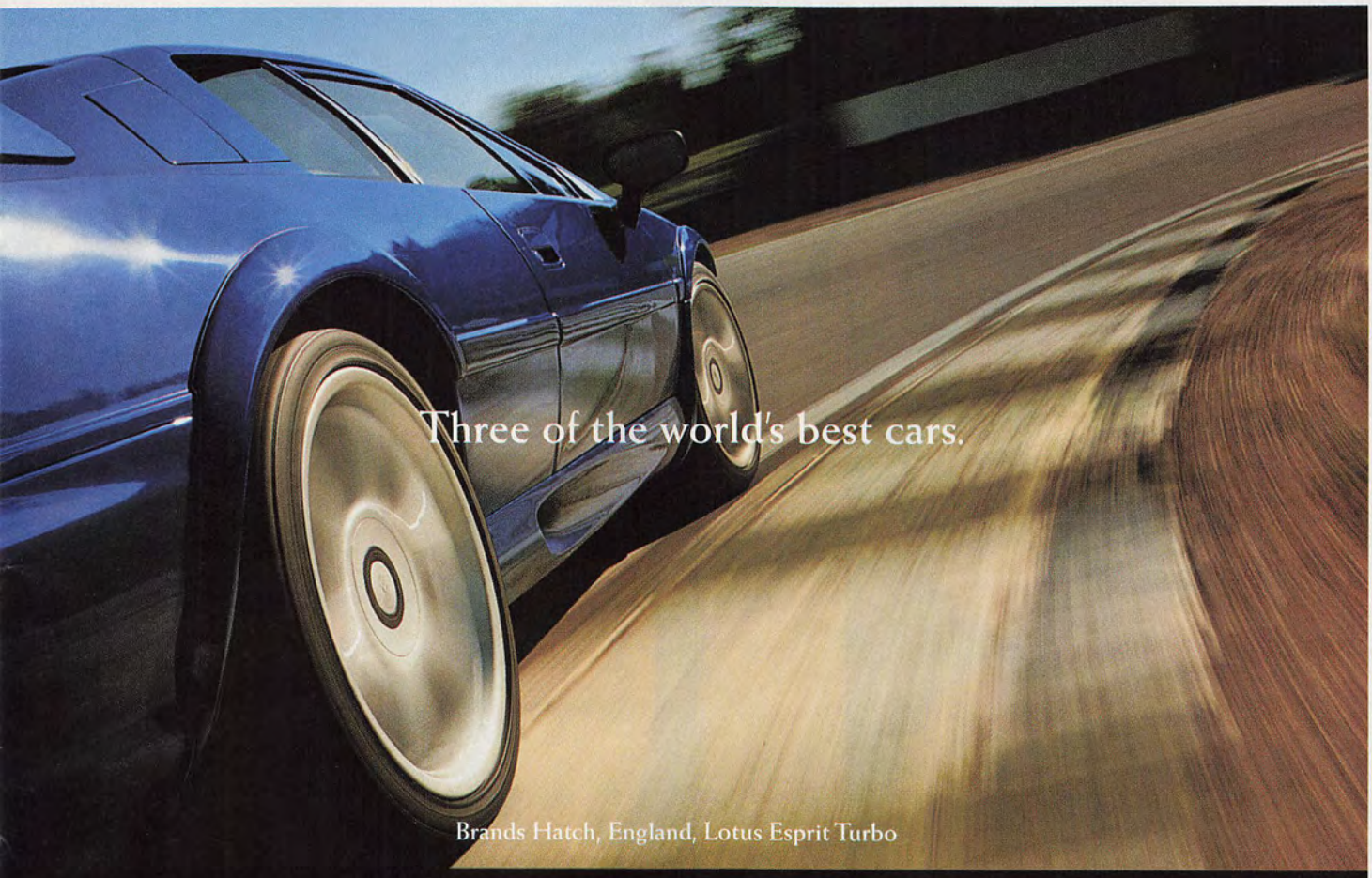

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Sports Illustrated
October 28, 2002
VOLUME 97, NO. 17

The Lineup

DEPARTMENTS

8 **Leading Off**

14 **Letters**
Our readers on America's best sports colleges

18 **Contributors**

21 **Catching Up With...**

23 **Air and Space**
Who's sorry now? Certainly not athletes **by Steve Rushin**

29 **Scorecard**
In Washington, D.C., this is the season of the sniper
The MLS Championship was a red, white and blue success
There is something for every sports fan at the Museum of Sex
The Show: the World Series, Terrell Owens and Karl Malone

41 **Faces in the Crowd**

178 **The Life of Reilly**
Dawn of a new day for sports fans: their own Bill of Rights

INSIDE...

169 **The NHL**
- Young Penguin gets a boost
- Flyers star back on his game
- Rule changes paying off big

173 **The NFL**
- Cris Carter back in uniform
- Texans count out Tony Boselli
- Dr. Z's weekly forecast

COVER

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BASEBALL

44 **World Premiere**
Barry Bonds and the Angels lived up to their billings—and made the Fall Classic a showstopper
by Tom Verducci

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

50 **What's Up, Joe Pa?**
Penn State coach Joe Paterno is letting loose on refs and letting it rip on offense
by Michael Bamberger

HORSE RACING

54 **Horse Power**
Heading into the Breeders' Cup trainer Bob Baffert, like him or not, is the king of his world
by Tim Layden

PRO FOOTBALL

58 **All Business**
Eagles cornerback Troy Vincent works as hard at making money as he does at making plays
by Josh Elliott

SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE
NBA PREVIEW 2002-03

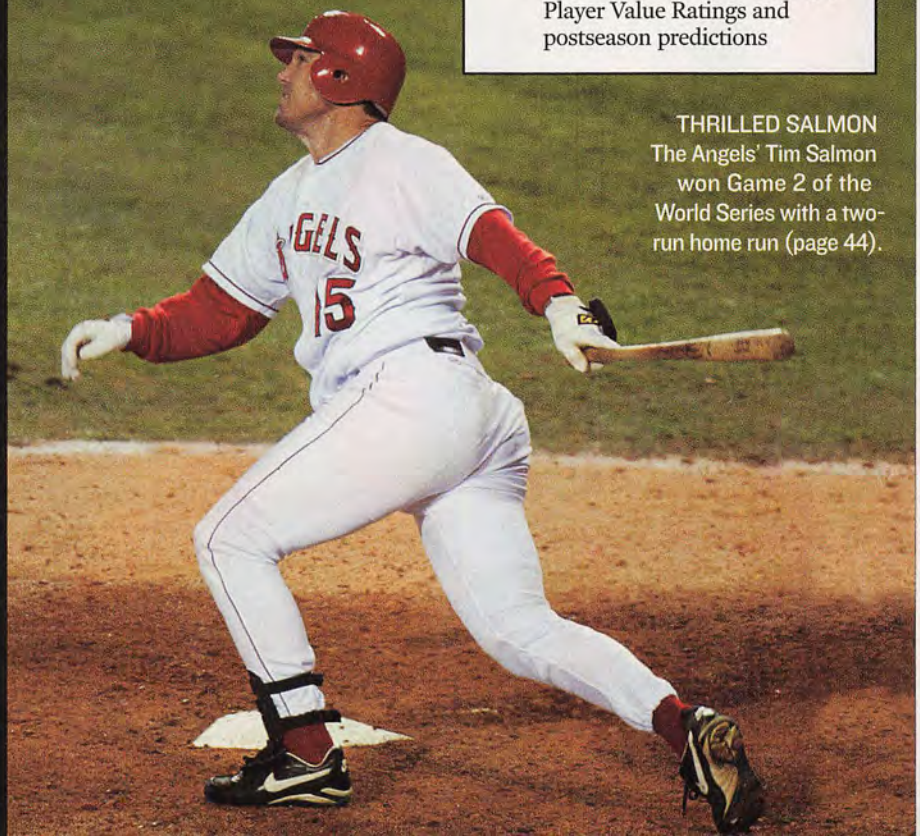
66 **The New Mr. Big**
The search for an answer to Shaq continues. Can Rockets rookie Yao Ming measure up?
by Ian Thomsen

72 **A Big Start**
Staking the future on two raw 7-footers, the Bulls hope the payoff is huge
by Chris Ballard

78 **Frankenshaq**
We have turned to mad science and created a beast to stem the onslaught of Shaquille O'Neal
by L. Jon Wertheim

84 **The Big Show**
It's in his role as court thespian that Kings center Vlade Divac really stars
by Jack McCallum

92 **Scouting Reports**
The lowdown on every team, plus SI's conference rankings, Player Value Ratings and postseason predictions



THRILLED SALMON
The Angels' Tim Salmon won Game 2 of the World Series with a two-run home run (page 44).

ROBERT BECK

Leading Off

Playing Footsie

Los Angeles Galaxy midfielder Cobi Jones (13) goes toe-to-toe with New England Revolution defender Daouda Kante during the MLS Cup 2002, which the Galaxy won 1–0 in overtime (page 30).

PHOTOGRAPH BY WINSLOW TOWNSON

Leading Off

Launch Sequence

Angels starter Jarrod Washburn helped Giants outfielder Barry Bonds make his first World Series at bat a memorable one, as Bonds went very, very deep in the second inning of Game 1 (page 44).

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN BIEVER

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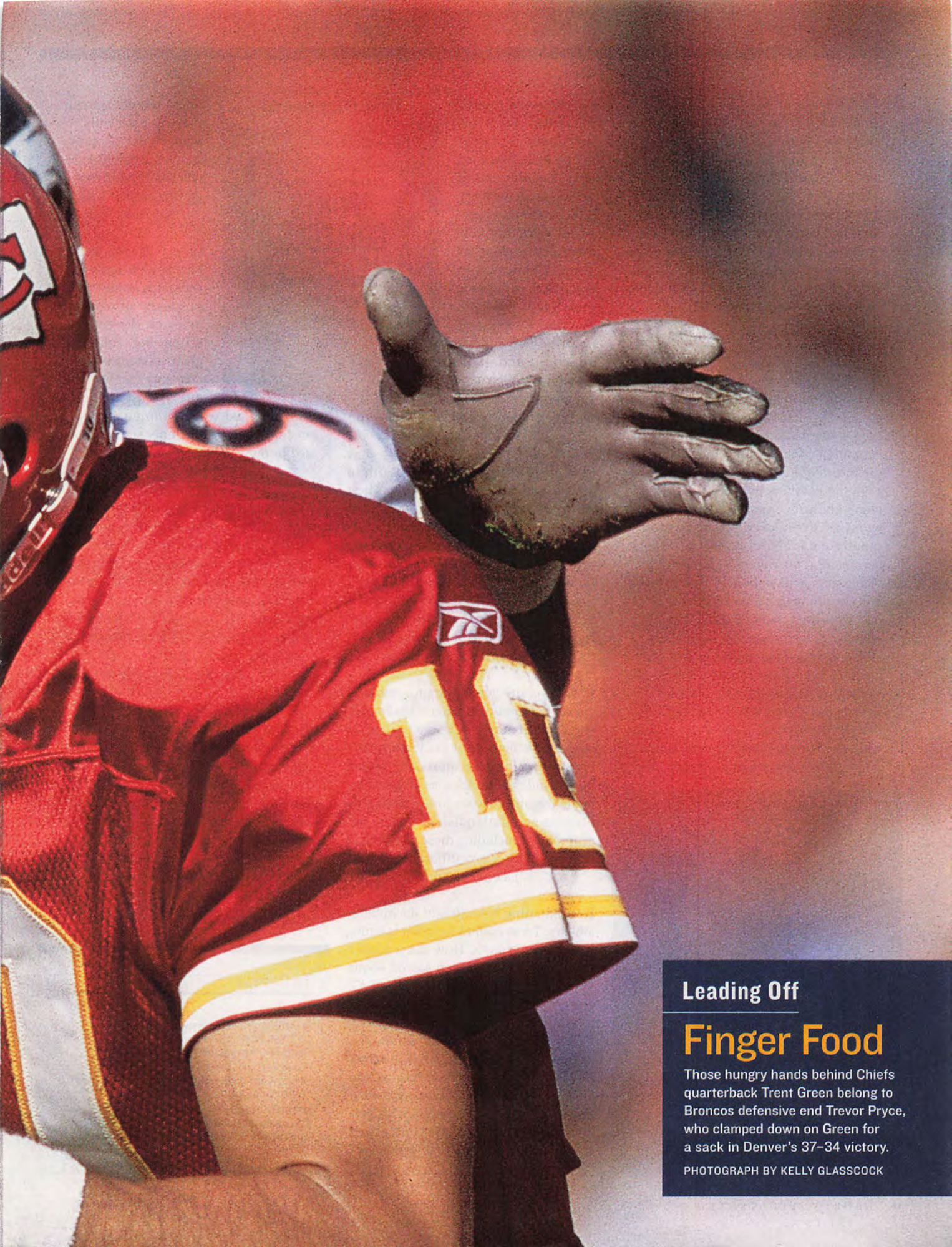


Leading Off

Finger Food

Those hungry hands behind Chiefs quarterback Trent Green belong to Broncos defensive end Trevor Pryce, who clamped down on Green for a sack in Denver's 37–34 victory.

PHOTOGRAPH BY KELLY GLASSCOCK

Physical Education

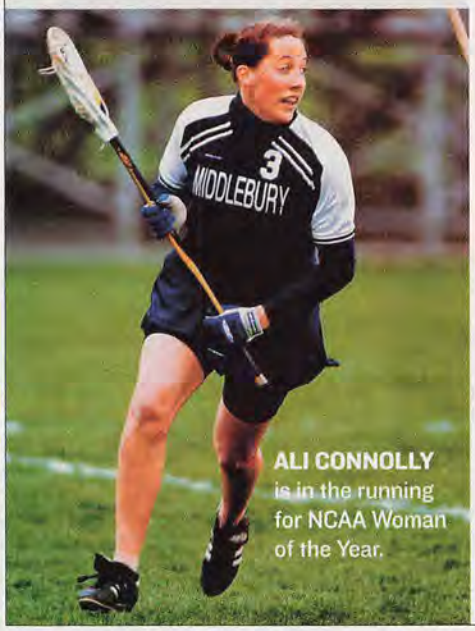
America's Best Sports Colleges (Oct. 7) is interesting and insightful. However, I disagree with your basis for giving the nod to Texas over Stanford. To me it is obvious that the first criterion should be the number of NCAA titles, and Stanford had three times the number of individual titles (18–6) and double the number of team titles (4–2) in the 2001–2 school year. The Cardinal has more varsity teams than the Longhorns (34–19), even though Texas has five times the number of students. Also, Stanford offers one intramural or club sport for every 265 students compared with one for every 429 students at Texas. I believe that any school with fewer than 7,000 students that can be successful in Division I college athletics and still maintain its high academic standards is by far the best sports college in the land.

Tim Marshall, Richmond, Mo.

Perpetual Panther Power

I realize that it's easy to choose Williams, perennial winners of the Sears Cup, as the top Division III sports school. However, if you measure success by national championships, nobody comes close to the record of Middlebury College. Since 1995 the Panthers have won 17 titles in men's and women's lacrosse, men's and women's ice hockey, women's cross-country and field hockey. This total could become 18 if the women's cross-country team defends its national title later this fall. Over the same time period Williams has won seven national championships, with five of them in tennis. A Middlebury athlete—my daughter Julia—won last season's Honda Award as the top D-III women's athlete, and another Middlebury woman has been selected as a finalist for the NCAA Woman of the Year Award, which will be announced later this fall.

Eric Bergofsky, Exeter, N.H.



ALI CONNOLLY is in the running for NCAA Woman of the Year.

PETER READ MILLER (COVER); HENRY HOPKINS

Sl's choice of a school that is 170th in athlete graduation rate as America's best sports college coupled with the news, announced that same week, that Florida State canceled classes for two days because of fears of a possible campus traffic jam caused by an evening football game (SCORECARD, Oct. 14) illustrates everything that is wrong with major college sports in America today.

Matt Cravets, Simi Valley, Calif.

If a university gets points for winning games in football and men's basketball, shouldn't it also lose some points for having ridiculously low graduation rates for athletes in those sports, for having players indicted for felonies and for having to dismiss coaches for recruiting violations and outlandish academic improprieties? Including those stats would have made for a very different top 10.

Jack Selzer, State College, Pa.

By graduating only 56% of its student-athletes, Texas exemplifies what is wrong with college sports. How can a school whose average freshman scored about 590 on the verbal portion of the SAT and about 600 on the math section fail to graduate more athletes? Obviously Texas' athletic department admits the athletes on a separate set of criteria from the admissions office. As a college admissions counselor and Stanford graduate, I have no problem with giving students a chance, but I do object strenuously to colleges that exploit athletes' talents on the playing field only to neglect the schools' true responsibility: to educate its students.

Jenyth Gearhart Utchen
San Ramon, Calif.

In my dream world having high academic standards is one of the purposes of college athletics. Not emphasizing the value of graduation rates weakens any scale that attempts to rank colleges. It's sad when winning championships becomes the only statistic valued by our society.

Peter J. Titlebaum, Dayton

The College of Charleston—having produced dozens of sailing All-Americas, three College Sailors of the Year since 1988 and a coed varsity sailing team that has finished no lower than fifth in the Intercollegiate Sailing Association rankings since '91, including the '98 national champions—should have garnered a spot in the top 200 schools.

Charles Earl, Charleston, S.C.

Reilly's Ryder Report

Rick Reilly (THE LIFE OF REILLY, Oct. 7) joined the Curtis Strange bashing brigade without considering the following. If second-ranked Phil Mickelson had defeated 119th-ranked Philip Price in the eighth match, and everything else had remained the same, a Tiger Woods victory over Jesper Parnevik in the last match would have retained the Ryder Cup for the United States.

Alan Lubell, New York City

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When Jack Nicklaus was a boy, his dad, Charlie, introduced him to golf. Within the context of the game, father taught son respect, integrity and sportsmanship, lessons Jack never forgot in a career acknowledged as the greatest in golf history: 71 PGA Tour victories, including a record 18 major championships.

That's why Nicklaus jumped at the chance to play a leading role for The First Tee, a World Golf Foundation initiative that gives America's youth a chance to develop life-enhancing values through golf and character education. It lets him pass along to thousands of kids what he learned from his father.

"I didn't grow up poor. I had the opportunity to play at a country club," Nicklaus says. "Other kids aren't that lucky. We're helping them start in the right place by teaching them ethics, manners and how to manage their lives."

"We're helping them start in the right place by teaching them ethics, manners."

Along with LPGA pro Juli Inkster, Nicklaus co-chairs The First Tee's More Than a Game campaign, whose goal is to introduce 500,000 kids to golf by December 2005. Nicklaus travels the country speaking to potential donors to raise money for the $50 million effort, which includes increasing the number of youth learning centers to 250. Many are in urban areas, and some provide free access for underprivileged kids.

At those facilities the youngsters learn far more than grip, stance and swing. The centers also emphasize a life-skills program that builds core values such as responsibility, confidence and perseverance. "Out of 500,000 kids, how many do you think are going to become championship golfers? Five?" Nicklaus says. "You're really just trying to improve their lives."

Two years ago Nicklaus and his wife, Barbara, designated a $1 million endowment (matched by the PGA of America) for instruction at First Tee chapters, and he has testified before Congress to gain additional funding. "Individuals the caliber of Jack Nicklaus only get involved in activities they want to be fully engaged in," says Joe Louis Barrow Jr., The First Tee's executive director. "It's wonderful to know that even when he's not at an official event for The First Tee, he's got it on his mind and is sharing it with individuals he associates with."

Nicklaus, 62, is generous outside The First Tee, raising funds for Mended Hearts, a cardiovascular patient support group. This fall he helped the Buoniconti Fund to Cure Paralysis with a charity tournament, and he's a longtime contributor to the children's hospital in his hometown of Columbus, Ohio.

The grandfather of 14 (a 15th was due in October) likes spending time with kids, particularly at First Tee clinics like one he attended near Seattle with Inkster in July *(pictured)*. He hopes The First Tee's lessons on life and the links will influence generations to come. "The important part is to get it established, keep it supported and financed so that the program works," he says. "I see it becoming a very important part of our society."—*Jordan Hyman*

For information or to make a contribution, write The First Tee, World Golf Village, 425 South Legacy Trail, St. Augustine, FL 32092, *call* (904) 940–4300 *or visit* www.thefirsttee.org.

To read other Power of Caring stories, visit www.cnnsi.com/caring.

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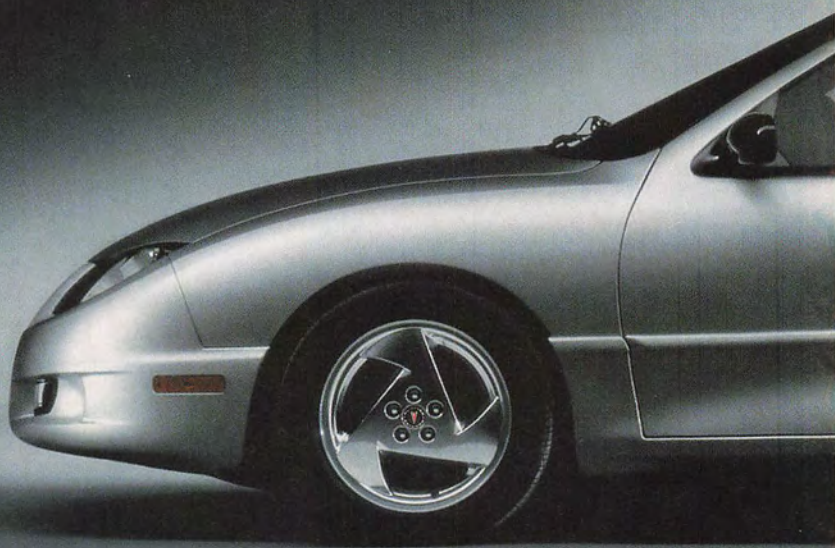

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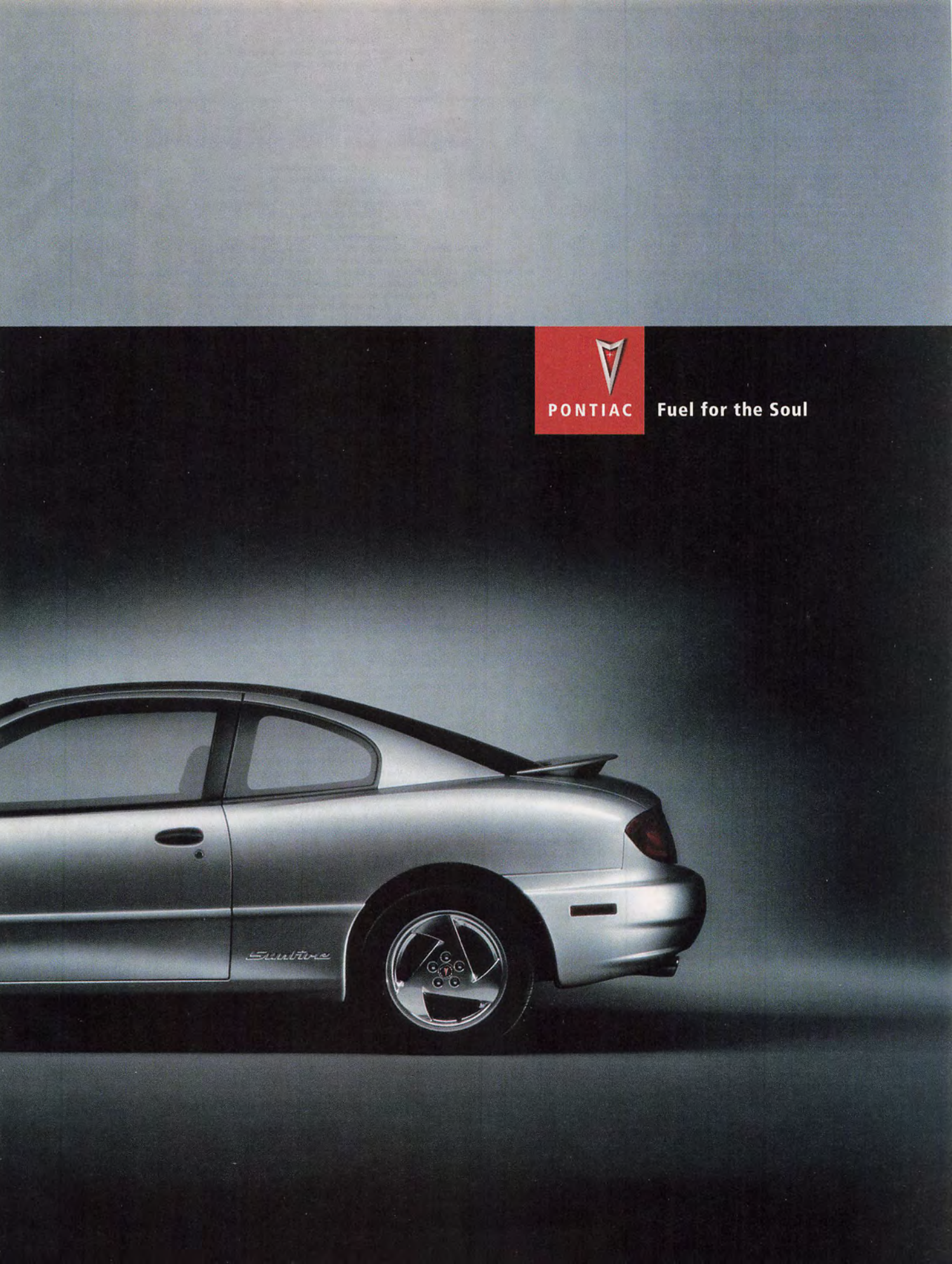
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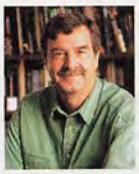
Dream Team

For this year's NBA preview issue we constructed Frankenshaq, the perfect center to take on the NBA's reigning monster, Shaquille O'Neal, and it fell to photo editor Marguerite Schropp Lucarelli *(left)* to collect the body parts. She combed her photo files as well as those at the NBA's library, trying to find images that were facing the right way and could be pieced together into a coherent whole. Says Lucarelli, who has been editing photos for SI since 1994, "It was like playing paper dolls; I was reverting to childhood."

Helping out with the pictures in the preview was staff photographer John W. McDonough *(right)*, who, like many NBA centers, has had a run-in with Shaq. McDonough was sitting courtside a couple of seasons ago when Shaq, going for a loose ball, stepped on the photographer's right ankle. "My foot went completely numb," says McDonough, who was not seriously injured. (Shaq later asked if he was O.K.) McDonough prepares for games as thoroughly as any player: He and his assistants arrive at an arena five hours before tip-off to rig seven to 10 remote-control cameras to supplement the shots he takes with his handheld Hasselblad and Canon. Says McDonough, "My goal is to make one really great picture a game."



In 1993 senior writer Jack McCallum *(left)* cowrote the book *Shaq Attaq* with Shaquille O'Neal, chronicling the player's rookie season in the NBA. For this issue he visited Sacramento center Vlade Divac, who because of the Kings-Lakers rivalry, says McCallum, "has emerged as a sort of foil to Shaq."

Senior writer Ian Thomsen *(right)* looks at the NBA's intriguing new big man, the Rockets' 7' 5" Yao Ming. Thomsen tried to get time with the Chinese star in the opening days of the World Basketball Championship in August but says that because of the language barrier and the mob of reporters around Yao, "I fed him about as many questions as his guards fed him passes in the low post." Thomsen, who eventually interviewed Yao later in the tournament, believes that within a few years he will be a top player: "American players might snicker because Yao doesn't know how to dunk. But I think he'll have the last laugh."

SI's man in the middle is pro basketball editor Hank Hersch *(left)*, who chose to put centers under a microscope in this issue because he sees a fundamental change in the role of the pivotman. "The only dominant center playing the position the traditional way is Shaq," says Hersch, who covered the NBA for a decade as a writer. "No one can figure out how to beat him at his game, so you're seeing other big men evolve in different ways." *—Bill Syken*

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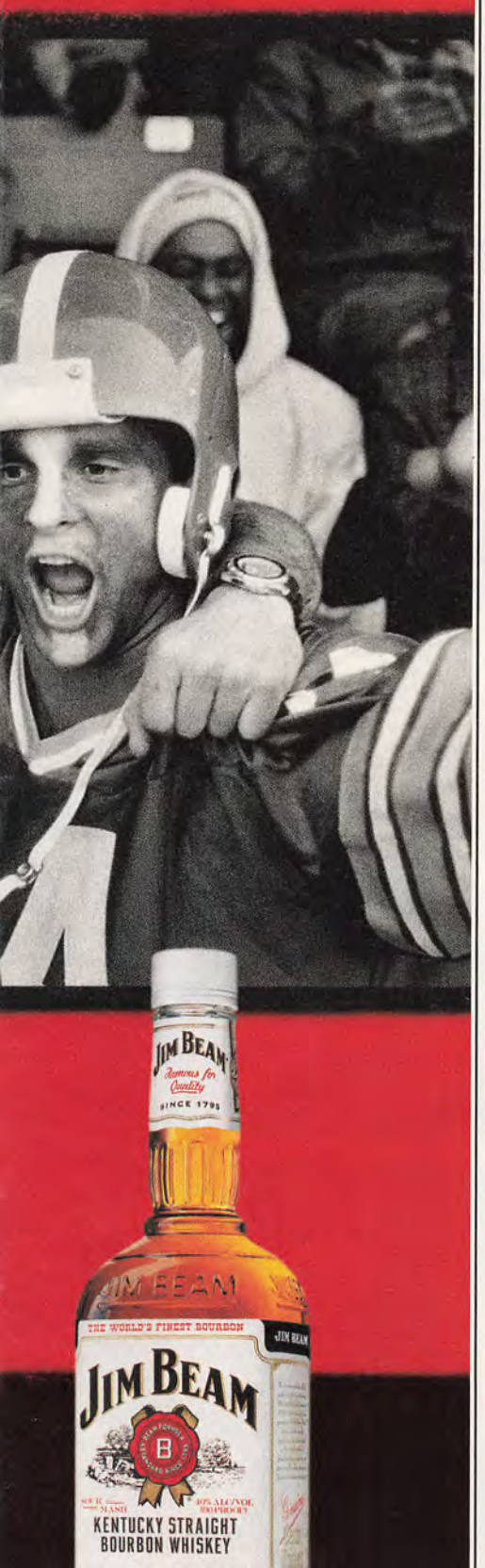
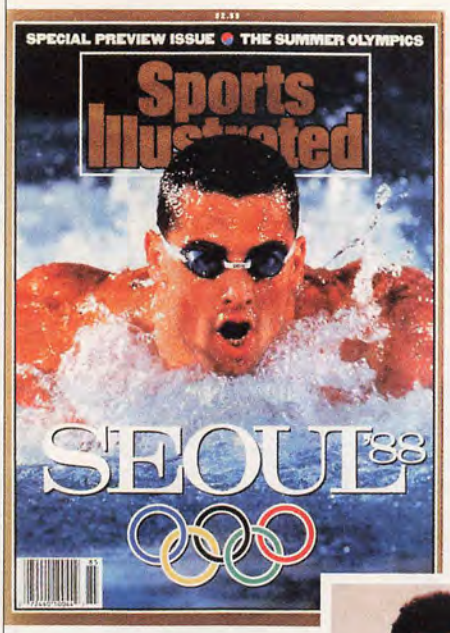


Matt Biondi, Swimmer

SEPTEMBER 14, 1988



FOUR YEARS ago Matt Biondi turned down a request from SI to be interviewed for CATCHING UP WITH because he felt as if his life hadn't moved forward, and he wasn't too happy about that. At the time he was earning a living as a motivational speaker and swim clinic instructor—basically trading on the fame that came with winning a record-tying 11 Olympic swimming medals (eight gold, two silver, one bronze) from 1984 through '92 and setting 12 world records along the way.

BIG SPLASH
Biondi won 11 medals in three Olympics and still holds one U.S. record.

Near the peak of his career he had seen the movie *Everybody's All-American*, about an athlete who clings to past glory, and the California native vowed never to make that mistake. To his mind, when SI first contacted him, he had not kept that promise.

Starting his second year as a math teacher, in Kamuela, Hawaii, Biondi has a renewed sense of accomplishment.

But he's ready to talk now, because he's accomplished something outside of the pool. He's no longer Matt Biondi, swimmer; he's Mr. Biondi, math teacher. In 2000 he earned a master's in teaching from Lewis & Clark College in Portland and since last fall has taught at Parker School, which has 126 students in grades seven through 12, in Kamuela, Hawaii. Instead of addressing adulatory fans on the rubber-chicken circuit, Biondi stands before a room of sarcastic teenagers—and he loves it. Raised in Maraga, Calif., and a graduate of Berkeley, Biondi chose to teach in Hawaii because his wife, Kirsten, is from Oahu. The couple live in an 800-square-foot house with their two children (Nate, 3, and Lucas, two months), and Matt rides his bike a quarter mile to work.

When asked to recount his swimming career, Biondi does so with a trace of weariness. In the year before the '92 Games in Barcelona, he says, "I can't tell you how many mornings I got to the pool and stood over the cold water and just had to force myself to drop in." His desire to distance himself from his past is such that when he had two job offers from Hawaii private schools, he chose the school that didn't have a swim team. As for his Olympic medals, after storing them in a bank vault, Biondi donated all of them in '94 to the National Italian American Sports Hall of Fame in Chicago.

One vestige of his former life: Biondi teaches an elective course entitled Personal Excellence, a trimesterlong version of his old 45-minute motivational speech. His message is, "You can't guarantee anything in life. But you can shape it, and you can direct it." He's much happier for having done that himself.

—Bill Syken

HEINZ KLUETMEIER (COVER); DARRELL MIHO

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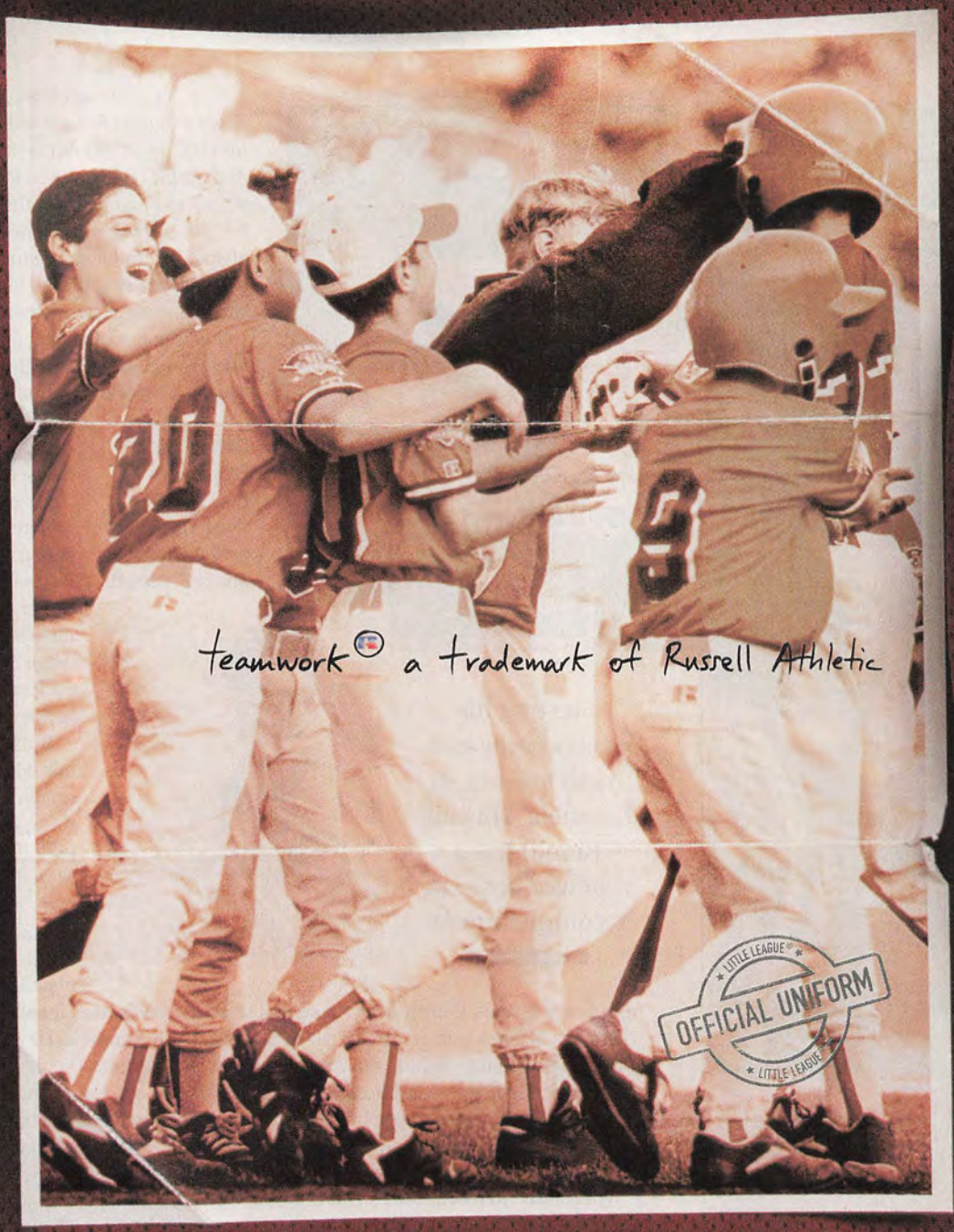

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Who's Sorry Now?

by Steve Rushin

JOHN WAYNE, in *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, said, "Never apologize, Mister. It's a sign of weakness." And he may have had a point, for Davis Love III *did* look weak at the Ryder Cup while serially apologizing—for his wayward shots—to playing partner Tiger Woods. Evidently, Love means *always* having to say you're sorry.

Which may be why—among athletes, anyway—apologies are now deader than the Duke. Who's sorry now? Hardly anyone, for anything. Time was you could count on at least *hollow* apologies from your heroes. So when Patton was ordered to publicly apologize for slapping two soldiers, he spat out the apology as if it were a piece of pork, Heimliched out of him by Eisenhower.

Patton was eventually relieved of his command, but then so was Ryan Leaf. Four years ago the Chargers' quarterback read, in monotone, a written apology (for manifold sins) that had been drafted, Ike-like, by team management. Afterward, with cameras still rolling, Leaf crumpled the statement into a tight ball and flicked it contemptuously into his locker, hitting his intended target for just the second time all season.

But at least Leaf *said* he was sorry. Not so Latrell Sprewell, who broke his shooting hand this summer and never informed his employer. The New York Knicks will still pay their convalescing forward $12.37 million this season, even though Sprewell reportedly incurred the injury by punching a man on his yacht. So, while we're guessing which nautical-pun name graces Spree's vessel—*Buoyz in the Hood*? *Class-Sea Felony*?—we might also mourn the passing of the simple apology, which in death has been turned on its head, like Ted Williams: The mea culpa is now a *you*-a culpa, the sinner is now sinned against.

"Don't kick me when I'm down," Sprewell told the Knicks, through *The New York Times*, after being fined about 1½ games' pay. "They always talk about us being a family, but now they're trying to push me away from the family. I haven't done anything but try to make this team better." If this sounds surreal, remember: Sprewell's response after choking his coach five years ago was to fire his agent and sue the NBA. Which brings to mind another yacht name: *Choke & Throttle*?

Last month, after allegedly taking a Minneapolis traffic-control officer for an invigorating (but, alas, unsolicited) ride on the hood of his car, Vikings receiver Randy Moss wrote one of the more exquisite public nonapologies of our time. For several minutes his statement rambled dangerously, like an old man in flannel pajamas near a busy road, before T-boning on the topic of his own victimization. ("I've been through a lot. . . . I don't know if trouble's out to find me, or whatnot.") And while Moss both acknowledged and disavowed wrongdoing in the space of a single sentence—"I knew they had to discipline me, for what reason I don't know"—he ultimately saw fit to apologize to everyone *but* the traffic officer: "My teammates, coaching staff, my immediate family" and, of course, "all the people that endorse me: Nike, Jumpman, Michael Jordan himself."

When judging the sincerity of an athlete's apology, one should always bear in mind the Mister Ed Rule: *Remorse is remorse, of course, of course, unless it's for products that you endorse.* In which case remorse is a mere masquerade for financial expediency.

As to the other charge against him—that marijuana residue was found in his vehicle—Moss was evasive. Had he simply stated that weed is never allowed in his car, we might at least have gotten the lively headline ROLLING MOSS GATHERS NO STONERS.

The last resort of the nonapologist is, of course, to cry Blown Out Of Proportion (BOOP). Moss, in a press conference, said that his story was BOOP. Steve Spurrier, while at Florida, disparaged New Orleans Saints coach Jim Haslett, but recently Spurrier said that *that* remark was BOOP. In a tidy tableau of what modern sports have become, 49ers receiver Terrell Owens—in one seamless motion—caught a touchdown pass on *Monday Night Football*, produced a Sharpie from his sock in the end zone, autographed the ball and handed it to his financial adviser in the front row. Owens didn't apologize to his opponents, and neither, remarkably, did his apologists: Niners center Jeremy Newberry said, "It's really getting blown out of proportion." So here's the deal: Next person to say Blown Out Of Proportion gets blown out of a cannon.

> Bear in mind the Mister Ed Rule: *Remorse is remorse, of course, of course, unless it's for products that you endorse.*

With apologies to Owens et al., no one has been less apologetic for more years than Bob Knight, who once said memorably, "When my time on Earth is gone and my activities here are passed, I want they bury me upside down, and my critics can kiss my ass."

So Knight aspires to spend eternity upside down, like his fishing buddy Teddy Ballgame, or like the apology itself. And though Knight's hero was Patton, and his nickname is the General, and he also emulates John Wayne, we might do well to remember that apologizing isn't *always* a sign of weakness and can even be a show of strength. John Wayne, remember, was just acting. And his real name was Marion. □

PETER GREGOIRE

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Scorecard

Edited by Kostya Kennedy and Richard Deitsch

Fields of Fear

In Washington, D.C., home of SI senior writer S.L. Price, this is the season of the sniper

The 12th bullet hit home just before the 2002 World Series began last Saturday night, and the rest of the evening rode that strange TV pendulum from frivolousness to menace, from rally monkey to murder scene and back again. It had become a familiar drill. After all, the night the 11th bullet hit, we flipped back and forth, back and forth from channel to channel, until the Giants' pennant-clinching win over the Cardinals segued for good into a report on the latest casualty. Bookshelves sag with endless blather about baseball's virtues, but here's one that has gone unnoticed: With so many gaps in the action, there's no better sport to monitor terror by. You can switch to the nearest news station, find out who, what, where and when, and never miss a pitch.

Forgive the black humor. That's all we have left to distract ourselves with these days in the Washington, D.C., area, where a sniper has shot 12 people, killing nine, in the meticulous rampage that began on Oct. 2. Since then, the region has spent its days mixing the most banal of acts—pumping gas, buying groceries, shuttling kids to school—with this sick jangle of apprehension. The one respite came on Monday when two men in Richmond were detained, until police announced they had nothing to do with the case. Life then returned to abnormal, and we went to bed listening to the choppers overhead.

All the fun stuff is gone: parades, parties, old-fashioned games of every kind. Schools are on universal lockdown, with no recess, and all after-class outdoor activity canceled. The weather is fine and cool, yet fields stand empty.

LOCKDOWN Games have been moved as far as 150 miles away.

Here and there, there have been some attempts at normality. On Thursday night Maryland played Georgia Tech in football at College Park, Md., but a beefed-up police presence kept watch for white box trucks. Some high school teams played after a two-week hiatus on Saturday, but many games were transplanted to fields hours from home and, in the case of D.C. public schools, parents had to trail team buses to find out where their kids would play. People talk about pushing past fear, but then, nobody blames officials in Prince Georges County, Md., where a boy was wounded by sniper fire on his way to school, for canceling its games.

More than ever, this remains a region under siege. Sept. 11 made local airports and planes suspect; last year's anthrax infestation made mail suspect. Now a killer threatens the daily routine. While families and coaches worry that lost high school games could cost their stars a scholarship, those in charge of younger kids haven't hesitated to halt play. In the Northwest D.C. neighborhood where I live, nearly every house has a kid stuck to the ceiling with pent-up energy. The soccer league has all but disappeared. There was hope of salvaging the T-ball season with a four-game jamboree this past Friday, complete with cop cars and a shield of parents ringing the field, but in the end, too many decided against setting their children up as targets.

I didn't want to see my son dead either. Yet I took him out to that same field on Friday afternoon, and threw soft pitches and watched him get fired up and grow bored like kids do. Once or twice I looked around at the tree line and felt exposed and stupid, but then he'd hurl the ball my way and I'd forget about it. The next night, number 12 went down.

On the morning after, Sunday, joggers huffed along in our neighborhood. A few college kids played soccer. None of us were being brave. It was just that we knew winter was coming, and there were only so many good days left. If we were lucky, we could come in and watch the World Series. If we were really lucky, we'd get to watch the whole game.

RICK BOWMER/AP

Heady Times

After seven years the MLS is finally winning America's hearts and minds

BETTING ON SOCCER Anschutz's (left) $135 million L.A. stadium will open in June.

On Sunday, almost lost in the noise created by the World Series and college football, the NFL and the NHL, NASCAR and the NBA, 61,316 fans attended Major League Soccer's seventh title game. And what went on *outside* Gillette Stadium in Foxboro, Mass., where the Los Angeles Galaxy beat the New England Revolution 1–0, might have been more remarkable than that fat attendance figure. Waving in the pregame barbecue smoke were many national flags—Portugal and Jamaica, Guatemala and Ireland, Mexico and Honduras. And yet the colors of the United States vastly outnumbered the rest.

Too often, soccer fans in the U.S. are treated as if it's un-American to follow the world's most popular pastime. Nonsense. "Soccer is the *most* American of sports," says MLS commissioner Don Garber. "This country is getting increasingly more ethnic, and professional soccer is positioned to capitalize."

Yes, MLS is still losing money. And regular-season attendance averaged just 15,822. But attendance rose this year for the second straight season, and billionaire Philip Anschutz, who owns six MLS teams, broke ground on the Galaxy's new jewel of a stadium, The Home Depot Training Center. Though Anschutz is being investigated by Congress for his financial dealings with troubled Qwest Communications, he insists that won't interfere with his commitment to soccer. "Mr. Anschutz will spend $20 million a year for the next 300 years if that's what it is going to take," says Anschutz Entertainment Group president Tim Leiweke.

As we learned at the World Cup, the league is producing a generation of precocious Yanks, including San Jose's Landon Donovan, Chicago's DaMarcus Beasley, both 20, and New England's Taylor Twellman, a 22-year-old striker who led the league in goals. "They're much more confident and technical than previous American players," says U.S. coach Bruce Arena.

That showed on Sunday. "This game was an incredible advertisement for MLS," Galaxy defender Alexi Lalas said after Carlos Ruiz scored in overtime. Afterward, an endless free-kick wall of cars clogged the streets. On one car a pair of bumper stickers issued a red, white and blue challenge. YO APOYO A LA SELE (I SUPPORT THE NATIONAL TEAM) read one sticker. And the other? I'M PROUD TO BE AN AMERICAN. —*Grant Wahl*

GO FIGURE

241 Fans of Oklahoma and Texas who spent the night in the inebriation unit of a Dallas detention center after the Oct. 12 Red River Shootout at the Cotton Bowl.

$20 First bid, on eBay, for Olympic great Carl Lewis's "off-white two-bread-holding, autographed toaster," which is being auctioned for charity.

15 Yards an NFL team will be penalized if one of its players is found carrying a foreign object on the field under a new policy informally known as the Terrell Owens Rule.

28 Players in major league history—including the Giants' Barry Bonds and the Angels' Troy Glaus—who have homered in their first World Series at bat.

$41.56 Average price of an NHL ticket, up 1.3% from 2001–02, the smallest increase in nine years.

14,713 Career passing yards for Kenton (Ohio) High quarterback Ben Mauk, who threw for 470 yards last Friday to break the national high school record of 14,457 set from 1995 to '98 by J.R. House of Nitro (W.Va.) High.

36 Starting position of NASCAR driver Kurt Busch, who won the Old Dominion 500 at Martinsville Speedway from deeper in a Winston Cup field than anyone else in the track's 47-year history.

TREND WATCH WEIRD WORDS

Last week the Grizzlies unveiled the name of their new arena, which will open in 2004 as FedExForum, marking the latest in the strange sports trend of smashing nouns together and capitalizing the first letter of a second and sometimes third word. "It's alliterative," said Grizzlies vice president of business operations Mike Golub. "It rolls off the tongue."

FedEx, which in 1999 bought the right to name the Redskins' home stadium FedExField, is bringing a bush league phenomenon to the big time. The past decade has seen the birth of minor league baseball teams such as the RedHawks (in Oklahoma City and Fargo, N.Dak.), the JetHawks (Lancaster, Calif.) and the RiverHawks (Rockford, Ill.), as well as basketball's SkyHawks (a USBL team in St. Louis) and hockey's IceHawks (a UHL franchise in Glens Falls, N.Y.). Hockey teams, in fact, will jam virtually any animal name after Ice. You've got IceDogs (Mississauga, Ont.), IceCats (Worcester, Mass.), IceGators (Lafayette, La.), IceHogs (Rockford, Ill.) and IceRays (Corpus Christi). No wonder people say minor league hockey's like a zoo.

This is just a sampling of the double-noun nicknames, yet team executives can't explain the phenomenon. "It's not grammatically correct, but our ad agency thought it made a better logo," says Steve Malliet, G.M. of baseball's independent Joliet (Ill.) JackHammers. "I'm not really the expert on why words flow or why they don't."

CAPITAL GAINS Welding nouns together gives admen a thrill.

WINSLOW TOWNSON; AP (ANSCHUTZ)

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FOR THE RECORD

Escaped From Toronto's Woodbine Racecourse and onto a major Canadian highway, Andover Hall, one of North America's top 3-year-old trotters. While in Toronto for a $542,500 race in last Saturday's Breeders Crown series, Andover Hall, who's won 11 of 22 lifetime starts, left the paddock, jumped a fence and galloped for 5½ miles along the shoulder of Highway 401 near Milton, Ont. A British couple visiting Toronto spotted the horse, kept pace with him in their car and guided him onto a grassy patch near an exit. The couple then secured Hall by placing a blanket over him and holding his bloody right hind hoof. Hall, who also suffered front-leg cuts, was scratched from Saturday's race and won't run again this year.

Sued For $40 million, by Knicks forward Latrell Sprewell, the *New York Post* and the paper's Knicks beat writer, Marc Berman. In the suit Sprewell says he was libeled by a *Post* story saying that he broke his right pinkie in a fistfight aboard his yacht.

Charged With a felony count of false imprisonment and a gross misdemeanor count of criminal sexual conduct, baseball Hall of Famer Kirby Puckett, 41. According to the complaint, on Sept. 6, Puckett pulled a woman into the men's room of a Minnesota restaurant and groped her. "We will meet, and we will beat these allegations in court," said Chris Madel, one of Puckett's lawyers. Puckett, who works as executive vice president for the Twins, retired as a player in 1995.

Died After several years of failing health, Mel Harder, 93, who won 223 games in 20 seasons with the Indians. A righthander with a superior curveball and pinpoint control despite severe nearsightedness, Harder pitched in four All-Star games from 1934 to '37 and didn't allow an earned run in 13 innings, still a record. Harder threw the first pitch at Cleveland Municipal Stadium when it opened in 1932 (he lost 1–0 to Lefty Grove and the Athletics) and the ceremonial first pitch at the final game there in '93. Joe DiMaggio, who hit .180 against him, once called Harder "the pitcher I had the toughest time batting against."

▸Of natural causes, swimmer and diver Aileen Riggin Soule, 96, who had been the oldest living female U.S. Olympic gold medalist. At the 1920 Games in Antwerp, Soule, then 14, won the springboard competition; four years later in Paris she won silver in the springboard and bronze in the 100-meter backstroke. After her Olympic triumphs Soule traveled the world putting on diving exhibitions and skated in Sonja Henie's 1936 film *One in a Million*.

▸After a long illness, Bob Gregg, 82, an auto racing legend in the Pacific Northwest who was nicknamed Bullet Bob the Barefoot Boy for driving shoeless. He raced from 1938 to '86, competing in midget racing, sprint cars, modifieds and stock cars. In July 2002, Gregg was chosen as Driver of the Century by the Golden Wheels Fraternity.

Reunited By happenstance, with *Monday Night Football* analyst John Madden, Lindsy Kimple, 17, of Kearney, Neb. A Nov. 26, 1990, SI story on Madden's cross-country bus travels included a photo *(above left)* of Lindsy and her brother, Travis, with Madden when the Kimple kids sought his autograph at a Kearney steak house. This time, a TV crew working on a Madden documentary recorded the chance meeting—at a Kearney barbecue joint. "Had I known there'd be cameras, I'd have dressed up more and put on a little makeup," said Lindsy, who coincidentally wore a yellow shirt on both occasions.

BILL FRAKES (MADDEN, 1990); TODD GOTTULA/KEARNEY HUB NEWS (MADDEN 2002); CHARLES REX ARBOGAST/AP (ANDOVER HALL); SEX MUSEUM OF N.Y. (HOWDY CLUB); R. CHRISTIAN ANDERSON/PHD (SANDOW)

The Sporting Life

Opened In Manhattan, the Museum of Sex, which turns out, after careful inspection, to have at least a couple of sports connections. One display in an exhibit called "How New York City Transformed Sex in America" commemorates the Howdy Club, a Greenwich Village bar that in the 1930s and '40s fielded a lesbian football team that played locally. Of even greater historical significance is an exhibit devoted to the grandfather of bodybuilding and muscle magazines: Eugen Sandow, a Prussian immigrant born Friederich Wilhelm Mueller in 1867. Touted as the perfect male specimen, Sandow toured the country at the turn of the century under the direction of Florenz Ziegfeld (who later created the Ziegfeld Follies), performing rare feats of strength. He often carried a pony across the stage and amazed audiences with an act called the Human Dumbbell. Two men would sit in wicker baskets attached to either end of a metal bar; using one hand, Sandow would slowly lift the bar above his head.

THE GAY GAMES
Athletes play a small but curious role in New York's Museum of Sex.

Unlike Mike Piazza, Sandow never held a press conference to announce he wasn't gay, and probably with good reason; news that he lived with a man and shunned his wife and two kids created a stir. Still, he had devoted fans, and his legend solidified when he began to appear nude, except for a leaf or tiny briefs, in statuesque poses on posters and trading cards. As the exhibit states, Sandow "created a popular interest in displays of the male physique" that led to the explosion of muscle magazines and muscle culture. Museum of Sex executive curator Grady Turner says the first muscle magazine, *Physical Culture*, was published shortly after World War I by health faddist Bernarr Macfadden, who used to walk to work barefoot in the winter. Now there's a surprise. Normally, you don't get into a sex museum for having cold feet. —*Kelvin C. Bias*

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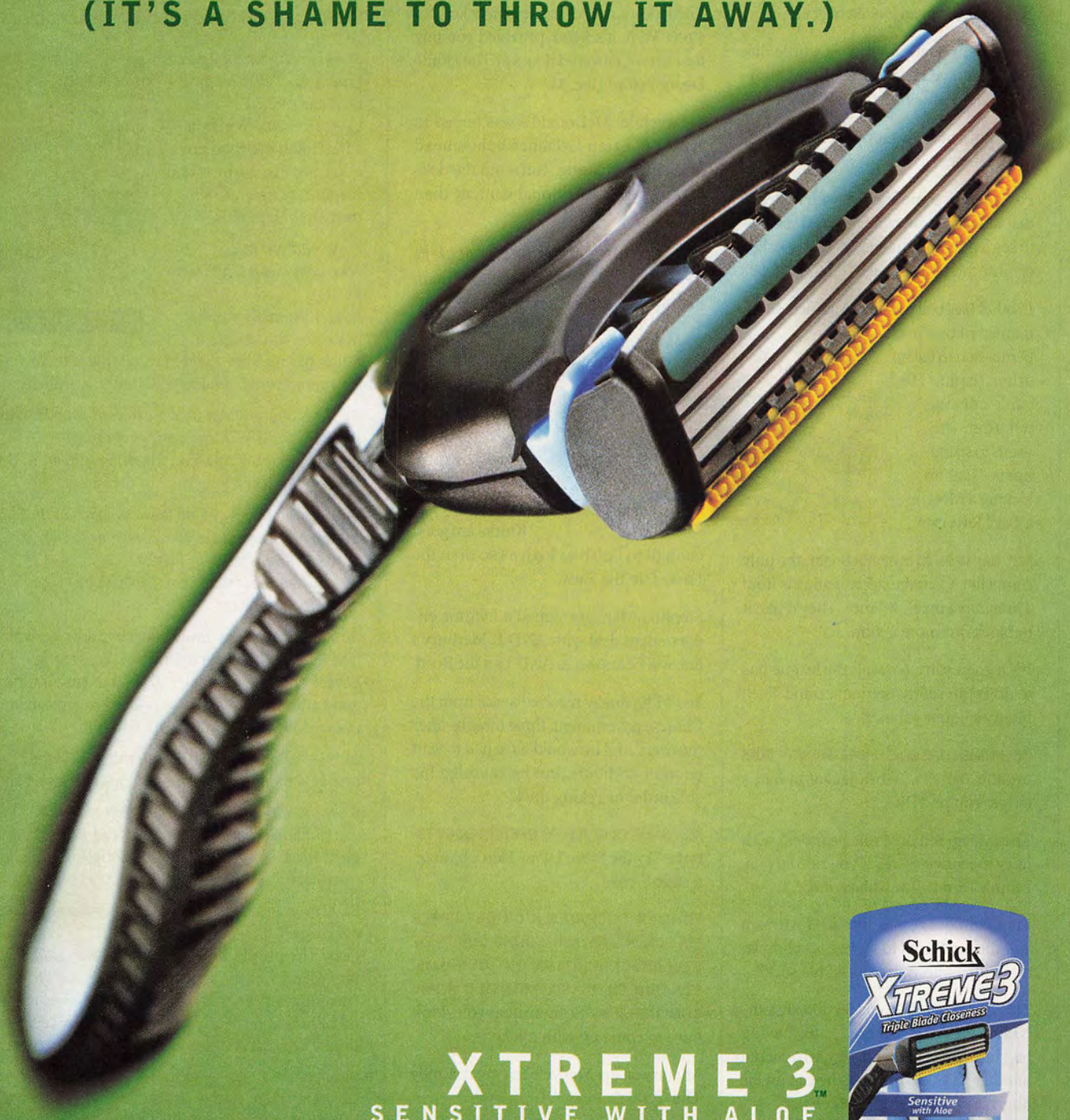

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THE SHOW | BY BILL SCHEFT

Sorry I'm late. I was waiting for my ranking from the BCS.

WORLD SERIES: SOMETHING WILD Barry Bonds is finally on a grand national stage. You think his head looked big before. . . .

Baseball in San Francisco is a little different. You've heard of the Rally Monkey? The Giants have a Rally Florist.

And don't miss the seventh inning costume change.

Fox is taking some liberties with that Virtual Manager. I saw one: "Would you like to see a pitching change, or another shot of those three babe lawyers on *Girls Club*?"

In other baseball news the Mariners gave manager Lou Piniella permission to talk to other teams. He can't decide whether he wants to spend next season kicking a Mets or a Devil Rays cap.

NET GAIN FOR NHL RINKS So far, the only complaint about the safety netting is from Thrashers fans in Atlanta. They'd like it to block out more action.

It's a good start. Now all the league has to do is put safety netting around Theo Fleury's liquor cabinet.

DOLPHINS LURE CRIS CARTER AWAY FROM "INSIDE THE NFL" Wow. Jackie Jr. had a longer run on HBO.

They've agreed on a one year deal with juicy incentives. Cris, if you need a pen, I think Terrell Owens has one.

Meanwhile, are you like me? Are you waiting for Terrell to score a touchdown and pull a telestrator out of his sock?

The league fined Owens $5,000 after the Niners-Seahawks game . . . for having his shirttail hanging out. Hey, what about another $10,000 because the cap on his Sharpie wasn't made by Reebok?

In other NFL news the Jets have moved their business offices into Manhattan. I believe they're located on Fourth and Long.

The Redskins are thinking of adding seats to FedExField. They need a place to put all the guys Steve Spurrier is trying out at quarterback.

The Falcons are selling season tickets for $100. Well, it's $100, provided you buy four sets of louvered doors at The Home Depot before Dec. 31.

Meanwhile, McDonald's was forced to recall its Brian Urlacher bobblehead dolls. Embarrassing. Turns out the dolls had a higher nutritional content than the Big Mac.

KARL MALONE BEGINS 18TH SEASON IN UTAH Eighteen years for the Mailman. Shouldn't he at least be up to Mail Supervisor by now?

Despite injuries to Antonio McDyess, Latrell Sprewell and top draft choice Frank Williams, many experts say the Knicks are good enough to finish as high as sixth in the East. The Big East.

Stephon Marbury signed a lifetime endorsement deal with AND 1. Marbury's line will be known as AND 1 for the Road.

Yao Ming finally received a visa from the Chinese government, three months after the draft. And he would have had to wait another 24 hours, but he canceled his side order of Peking duck.

FOX SPORTS GRILL TO OPEN IN SCOTTSDALE Try the Steve Lyons Hero: ham on a stale b-roll.

FORMER DOLPHINS KICK RETURNER FULTON WALKER JR. FOUND GUILTY OF SELLING MARIJUANA OUT OF HOME, SENTENCED TO SIX MONTHS' HOME CONFINEMENT Sometimes, you don't have to come up with a joke.

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Bill Scheft's first novel, The Ringer *(HarperCollins), is now available. Mention* SPORTS ILLUSTRATED *and pay full price.*

Q+A MARV LEVY

With a master's degree in English history from Harvard, the Hall of Fame coach is one of the most formidable minds to ponder over "Should we go for it or punt?" At 77, and five years out of the game, he writes a weekly column on NFL.com.

He'd consider coaching

SI: *Which historical figure proved most effective for a pregame speech?*
Levy: I've used Winston Churchill more than any other because he provided inspiration against overwhelming odds.

SI: *Would you read NFL.com if you didn't write for it?*
Levy: I probably would because—and this is a tough admission—I just became Internet conversant four months ago. Welcome to the new millennium!

SI: *How long would it take me to read your Harvard thesis on the WWII lend-lease program?*
Levy: It wouldn't take you that long to read it. But it would take you a long time to prepare it.

SI: *You won the Grey Cup twice as coach of the CFL's Montreal Alouettes. Do you know how to say, "You're an overofficious jerk," in French?*
Levy: I was nicer than that. I would just say, *"Bonjour, monsieur."*

SI: *What would you have done if one of your receivers had signed a ball with a Sharpie after scoring a TD?*
Levy: I had only two rules. Don't be late. And be a good citizen. I would try very hard to educate him not to do that, but I wouldn't fine him.

SI: *Would you want to coach in the NFL again?*
Levy: Probably so. I would not close the door on it.

SI: *If you had to bet whether a team will make four straight Super Bowls, as your Bills did, what's your call?*
Levy: First, commissioner Tagliabue will not allow me to bet. And, yes, but only if I coach it.

SI: *Do you think of 83-year-old Andy Rooney as an old codger?*
Levy: The people who decry what Andy said as a prejudicial remark always come back to "He's an old curmudgeon" or "It's his generation." They are being more prejudicial and age-biased in their criticism. I think [ageism] is the one prejudice people still accept.

SI: *Any advice on how to stay so energetic at 77?*
Levy: Age is inevitable. Aging isn't. I exercise a lot. And I try to keep my mind working by answering questions like these. —R.D.

For more from Marv Levy, go to cnnsi.com/scorecard.

ILLUSTRATION BY JEFF WONG; MIKE SEGAR/REUTERS

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SPORTS BEAT

THIRTY-SIX YEARS after their famous heavyweight title bout, **Muhammad Ali** and **George Chuvalo** shared the stage at Toronto's SkyDome on Sunday night at a Parkinson's Society of Canada fundraiser in conjunction with a CFL game between the Toronto Argonauts and the Ottawa Renegades. The attendees—who included **Lennox Lewis**, **Evander Holyfield** and **Larry Holmes**—caught a first glimpse of the fight documentary *The Last Round*. The film reexamines the March 29, 1966, bout at Maple Leaf Gardens in which Ali beat Chuvalo, Canada's homegrown heavyweight contender, in a 15-round decision. Ali has called it his toughest fight. "People thought Chuvalo would go only three, maybe four rounds with Ali," says *The Last Round* director **Joseph Blasioli**. "Those 15 rounds extended Chuvalo's career another 15 years."

Kid Rock

■ One of NASCAR's most ardent groupies is no stranger to groupies himself: **Kid Rock**. During the rain-delayed Winston Cup race in Concord, N.C., on Oct. 13, NBC pit reporter **Matt Yocum** found Rock hanging out in driver **Tony Stewart**'s trailer and asked if he'd play a song to kill some airtime. "Let me go grab a guitar," Rock replied. He wound up performing an acoustic rendition of **Lynyrd Skynyrd**'s melodic Dixie paean, *All I Can Do Is Write about It*, with harmonica help from **Jimmie Bones** (the keyboardist from the **Twisted Brown Trucker Band**). Rock and his fiancée, **Pam Anderson**, were also Stewart's guests at a race in Bristol, Tenn., last March.

■ Maybe you caught Giants defensive end **Frank Ferrara**'s performance on Oct. 13, when in his first career start he roughed up the Falcons with a forced fumble, nine tackles and 1½ sacks. The hard-hitting style that won him a spot on New York's roster as an undrafted free agent out of Rhode Island also serves him well in his other career—as a stuntman. The 6' 3", 280-pound Ferrara, 26, has done stunt work in about a dozen movies including *Die Hard with a Vengeance* and *Meet Joe Black*, and he'll play a security guard in the upcoming *Anger Management* with **Adam Sandler**. "It's tough work," Ferrara says. "Guys get broken bones, concussions, burns." Ferrara, who made his movie debut as a 10-year-old in 1986 when he dodged a truck in *F/X*, got into the biz through his father, Frank Sr., a stunt coordinator who is **James Gandolfini**'s double in *The Sopranos*.

■ Lions rookie quarterback **Joey Harrington** is taking abuse from teammates for getting cheeky with *Cosmopolitan*. In the November issue, Harrington appears as one of the "50 Hottest Hunks in the U.S." and reveals that "touching a woman's face and putting my face against hers excite me. Soft cheeks are so appealing." That prompted reactions from Detroit guard **Tony Semple** ("I'm just going to pretend I didn't see this") to quarterbacks **Ty Detmer** ("So he's really in touch with his feminine side") and **Mike McMahon** ("The cheek is definitely not the favorite part of the female body for me"). Harrington says he just wanted to help the organization. "What I was trying to do was reach out to a demographic that wouldn't usually watch football."

■ While in Toronto, Lewis addressed rumors that he had signed on to face pro wrestling champ **Brock Lesnar** in a WWE pay-per-view event. At a press conference Lewis denied that he'll be tangling with Lesnar, but said he had talked to WWE boss **Vince McMahon** "about a relationship, whether it be guest refereeing or something of that nature."

THIS WEEK'S SIGN OF THE APOCALYPSE

A woman, seeking to be artificially inseminated, took out a classified ad on a San Francisco website offering to trade World Series tickets for healthy sperm.

PICTURE THIS Imagine being Anna Kournikova's personal leg waxer. Oleg Kulik can, but what he is, really, is an artist who spent much of last Saturday installing this piece at Moscow's XL Gallery of Contemporary Art. Kulik, like a lot of guys, found inspiration in the shapely Anna, but says the figure's face—which to some looks like Russian tennis star Elena Dementieva's—represents no one in particular.

« THEY SAID IT RANDY MOSS

Vikings receiver, on former teammate Cris Carter (80), who left HBO's *Inside the NFL* to sign with the Dolphins: "I love it. And I think a lot of football teams he's been making comments about will love it too."

JEFF MOORE/ZUMA PRESS, INC. (ROCK); ALEXANDER NATRUSKIN/REUTERS (PICTURE THIS); HENNY RAY ABRAMS/AFP (CARTER AND MOSS)

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THE WEEK IN TELEVISION

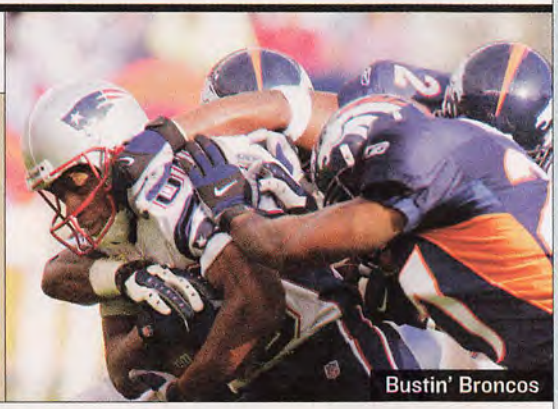
OCTOBER 25 – 31

SATURDAY 10/26 > ABC NOON > **No. 6 Notre Dame at No. 11 Florida State**
An upset here and the Irish—who face Boston College, Navy and Rutgers over the next three weeks—could be 11–0 heading into the Nov. 30 game at USC.

SATURDAY 10/26 > NBC 1 PM > **The Breeders' Cup World Thoroughbred Championships**
Racing's richest day centers on the final career race for Kentucky Derby and Preakness winner War Emblem, who'll be heading to Japan for the stud life.

» DON'T MISS
SUNDAY 10/27 > CBS 4 PM

Broncos at Patriots
After starting the season with three straight wins, the Pats were thinking Super Bowl repeat. Since then they've lost three in a row, been outscored 75–37 and are now fighting to catch AFC front-runners like the Broncos (5–2).


Bustin' Broncos

SUNDAY 10/27 > FSN WEST 5 PM (PST) > **Showtime Dreams: The 2002–03 Laker Girls**
This hourlong *American Idol*-esque program captures all the pomp (poms) and circumstance of the Laker Girls tryouts.

MONDAY 10/28 > ABC 9 PM > **Giants at Eagles**
Stay awake! The last two games between these NFC East rivals—both Philadelphia wins—were decided by three points or fewer.

TUESDAY 10/29 > TNT 7:30 PM AND 10:30 PM > **76ers at Magic; Spurs at Lakers**
Practice? No, Allen Iverson, this is the real thing. The NBA season begins with Iverson visiting Disney World and the three-time champs—sans Shaq—hosting Tim Duncan.

WEDNESDAY 10/30 > ESPN 7 PM AND 9:30 PM > **Wizards at Raptors; Lakers at Trail Blazers**
ESPN's first NBA TV broadcast since the 1983–84 season includes an Air Jordan and a Jordan heir (Toronto's Vince Carter) and, of course, those champs again.

UNDER REVIEW

- Doing It the Hardaway
- Hammond at Home
- Wall-to-wall Women

►Like former Vikings receiver Cris Carter—who last week left his analyst's job on HBO's *Inside the NFL* and signed with the Dolphins—ESPN's newest NBA analyst, Tim Hardaway, is both young enough (36) and skilled enough (last year he averaged 9.6 points and 4.1 assists for the Mavericks and the Nuggets) to return to his athletic life. So what does he say to NBA teams in need of a point guard? "There's no calling me this year," Hardaway told SI. "Call me next year." After beating out a dozen candidates, including former teammate Alonzo Mourning, in a tryout two weeks ago, Hardaway signed a one-year deal to work on ESPN's Friday NBA doubleheaders. "He's engaging and very quick to voice an opinion," says ESPN senior vice president Jed Drake. "He lights up the screen." Hardaway's biggest challenge may be to rein in his impulses. "Most of the time I'll be watching and I'll say, 'That guy, he ain't s---.' But I know I can't say that on TV. Now I've got to say, 'What was that guy thinking? He's a better ballplayer than that, and he needs to start playing better.' "

►After undergoing successful double-bypass surgery on Oct. 14, NBC's Tom Hammond, 57, will miss his first Breeders' Cup telecast since the series began in 1984. Rather than bring in a replacement for the Oct. 26 broadcast, NBC will expand the role of the other Breeders' Cup regulars—including Bob Costas and Charlsie Cantey—and Hammond will provide commentary from his home in Lexington, Ky.

►Hoops equality: Next March, for the first time in the 21-year history of the NCAA women's basketball tournament, all 63 games will be televised. ESPN and ESPN2 will carry the games. —R.D.

ED ANDRIESKI/AP

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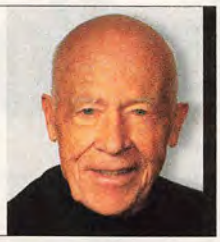
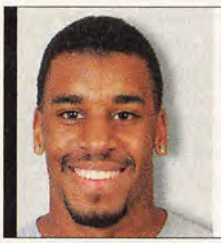
Faces in the Crowd



John Besson, LAKE OSWEGO, ORE.
Marathon
Besson, 90, a retired rear admiral in the Navy, set an American record for the 90-plus age group when he finished the Portland Marathon in 6:48:44. He broke the mark of 7:25:12 established by Abraham Weintraub in 2000.

Mike Bevilacqua, MARSHFIELD, MASS.
Soccer
Bevilacqua, a Gettysburg (Pa.) College senior, scored a goal with 1:33 remaining in a 1–0 win over Messiah College. Messiah had been the top-ranked Division III team going into the match and had not been scored upon in nine games.

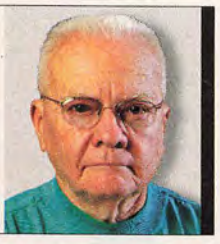
Senta Willenborg, DYERSVILLE, IOWA
Golf
Willenborg, a junior at Simpson College, became the third of her sisters to win the Iowa Intercollegiate Athletic Conference individual championship. Her sister Leah won it four times, from 1992 to '95, and Hannah won it in '96 and '99.



Tony Sutton, AKRON
Football
Sutton, a sophomore running back at the College of Wooster, ran for 313 yards and five touchdowns during a 37–14 win over Ohio Wesleyan; he set a North Coast Athletic Conference record for rushing yards and tied marks for touchdowns and points scored.

Adam Swartzbaugh, ROCKPORT, MAINE
Mountain Biking
Adam, a senior at Camden Hills Regional High, won the junior division of the NORBA national cross-country championship at Mount Snow, Vt. He completed the 24-mile course in 1:45:39.10, more than two minutes ahead of his nearest competitor.

Judy Jeanes, MENDENHALL, PA.
Canoeing
Jeanes, 37, swept the three events that make up the Delaware River Grand Slam distance canoe series when she won the 13-mile state championship race in two hours, 11 minutes. She had previously won nine- and eight-mile races.



Jim Hulsman, ALBUQUERQUE
Basketball
Hulsman, 72, was named high school coach of the year by the National High School Athletic Coaches Association and the National Federation Coaches Association. He recently retired with seven state titles in 34 years and a record of 660–223.

If you want to submit a candidate for Faces in the Crowd, go to **cnnsi.com/faces.**

FROM TOP: EDMUND KEENE; STEVE DOWELL; TIM MCCONNELL/SIMPSON COLLEGE; MATT DILYARD; MARK HASKELL PHOTOGRAPHY; LAURIE BECK; JIM THOMPSON

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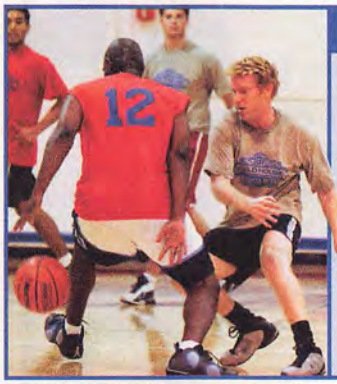
STARTER Presents ***Getting Started***

Hoops On Your Horizon



Fast-Break Points

- ✔ Watch TV games to see how teams organize and move and how officials call the action.
- ✔ You don't have to be a scorer. Plenty of players are ball hogs, but teamwork decides the game.
- ✔ Know the players' roles on court. Get the ball to the point guard, and remember to keep moving on offense, even if you don't have the ball.
- ✔ Check with your local gym, rec center or parks department to find out about organized leagues like those at New York City's Chelsea Piers *(left)*.

AT NEW YORK CITY'S CHELSEA Piers Field House, basketball director Jim Murray honors the sport's spirit by welcoming everyone. The 80 teams that play recreational ball each week represent people of myriad backgrounds, and they include former college athletes, playground veterans and 9-to-5 office guys who just want postwork camaraderie and some hint of a jump shot. "I've seen beginner teams start off not knowing how to play," he says. "Year by year they improve. A lot of these guys never played organized ball before. They love the fact they're on a team."

That feeling of inclusion might be the best of many reasons to take up basketball. Plenty of friendships develop from sharing the joys of the game. "It teaches you to be involved in something bigger," USA Basketball executive director Jim Tooley says. "You don't always have to be the center of attention. Setting the pick is as important as taking the shot."

Why else join Hoops Nation?

For one, it's easy to emulate your sports heroes. Fans of March Madness or the pro playoffs can sink their own game-winning three-pointer or swipe the clutch steal. Unlike most other popular team sports, basketball requires few people and a game is easy to organize. All you need are a shirt, shorts, sneakers and a ball, and you can find hoops hanging in suburban YMCAs, in neighborhood driveways or on asphalt city courts. Flying solo? Just slide into a pickup game or work on your jumper.

Full-court, five-on-five contests—like those at Chelsea Piers, which have referees and digital clocks—enhance the rigorous, entertaining workout. As TV analyst and former Notre Dame coach Digger Phelps notes in *Basketball for Dummies*, "No other team game flows so freely and allows its performers such freedom of expression."

Before you run full-court, Murray suggests getting in good enough shape to hustle up and down the floor. At 35, he also knows he must stretch before and after he plays, focusing on the hamstrings and back. "You get to a certain age, your body doesn't act the way it did when it was 20," he says.

Watching the game on TV can help you pick up subtleties of skills, strategies and rules. (The more a player knows, the less he'll lose composure arguing calls.) Murray, a coach's son who has been teaching clinics since he was 18, offers a few tips of his own. He tells players to move their feet while defending so they're in better position and commit fewer fouls. And when teams are trailing, he suggests dictating tempo with an in-your-face man-to-man defense, rather than sitting passively in a zone defense.

Prospective players can find leagues for men and women of all skill levels at gyms and recreation centers across the country. If your game is up to it, look for stiffer tests. Grab two friends and play in the Hoop-It-Up three-on-three tour, which visits 40 U.S. cities. The best teams then compete for a national title during the pro all-star weekend. Or lace 'em up at pickup meccas like the West Fourth Street courts in New York City or Philly's Shepard Recreation Center, where Wilt Chamberlain got his start.

"It's a sport that doesn't have any boundaries," Tooley says. Thriving everywhere, basketball extends an open invitation. —*Alec Morrison*

This is the first in a series of features about participation in various sports and activities. The next* Getting Started*, in the Nov. 25 issue, is on cross-training.

No matter the setting, hoops players can bask in the game's camaraderie.

CHUCK SOLOMON (TOP); ALLSPORT

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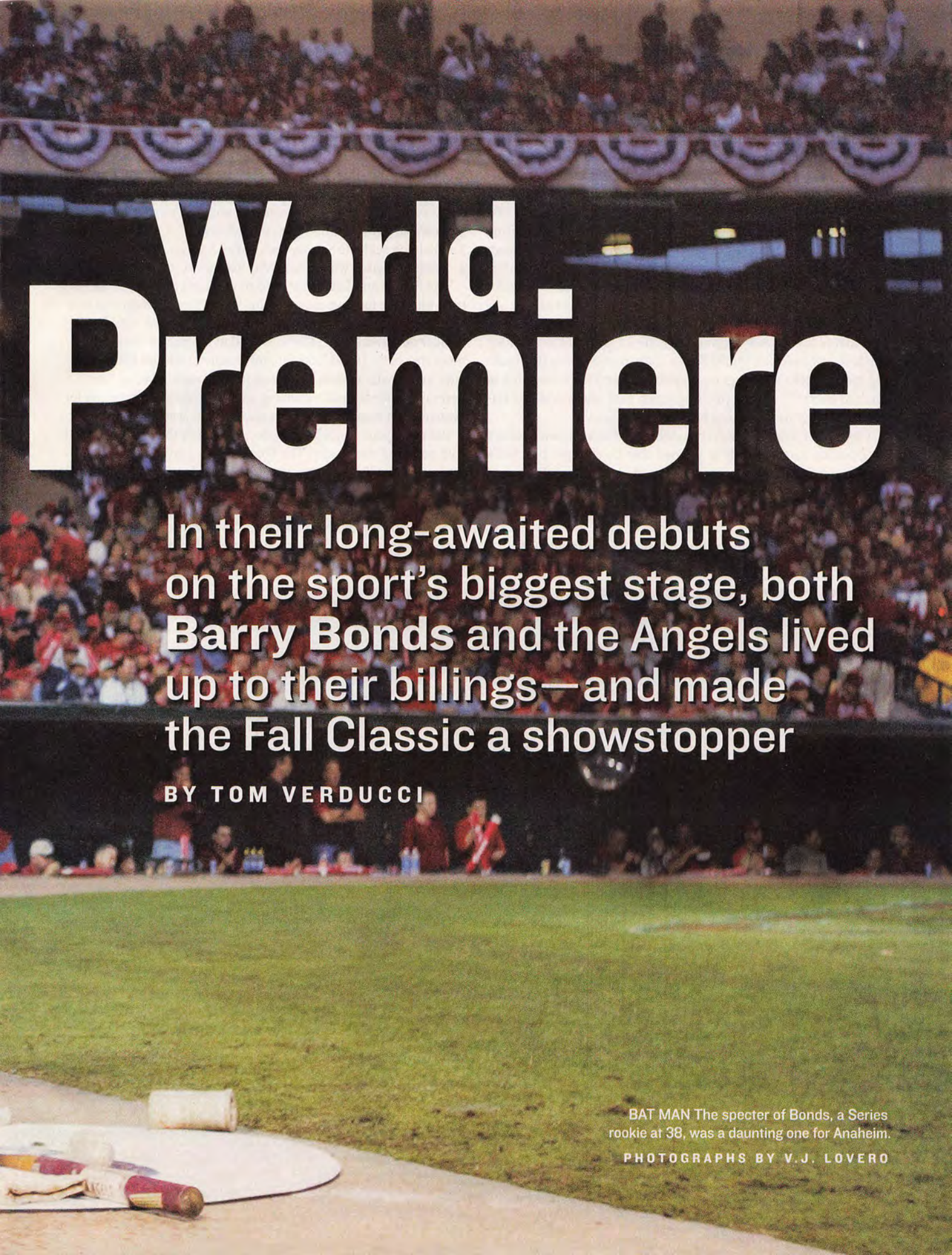
Sports Illustrated

World Premiere

In their long-awaited debuts on the sport's biggest stage, both **Barry Bonds** and the Angels lived up to their billings—and made the Fall Classic a showstopper

BY TOM VERDUCCI



BAT MAN The specter of Bonds, a Series rookie at 38, was a daunting one for Anaheim.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY V.J. LOVERO

HEIFETZ WAS but 16 when he made his Carnegie Hall debut, Horowitz only 24. Barry Bonds was 38 last Saturday when at last he stood on the precipice of the *ne plus ultra* for a ballplayer, the World Series. With only a little more than one hour left to a lifelong wait, the San Francisco Giants leftfielder stood alone in a stairwell that descended from the visiting dugout at Anaheim's Edison Field, poking his head high enough to measure the rising tumult and tension of the filling ballpark. His manager, Dusty Baker, would later observe that Bonds "was really, really focused and kind of quiet" as the moment neared.

If from the top of his concrete burrow Bonds's posture resembled that of the proverbial groundhog, he surely could see his long shadow cast over this World Series. "My pitchers have been asking me all week, 'Are we going to pitch to Barry? Are we going to pitch to Barry?' " Angels pitching coach Bud Black said last Friday. "And they were kidding only half the time."

The most feared hitter ever, judging by the avoidance tactics of opposing teams, Bonds is so good that he changes baseball's standard rules of engagement. In the chess game of this year's World Series, he is the only queen on the board, influencing nearly every move with the unequaled breadth of his power, even when standing still. Anaheim manager Mike Scioscia sat in his dugout on the eve of Game 1 and predicted, "You're going to see some things that in other eras of the game would seem unconventional and way out there, but in these games make sense."

It took only two games to realize that there had never been a World Series like this, and not only because Bonds had not played in any of the previous 97. For just the seventh time in history the Series was tied after two one-run games, and never had such a deadlock created so many runs (28). "I'm exhausted," Angels rightfielder Tim Salmon said late Sunday night, after Anaheim had answered a 4–3 San Francisco win on Saturday with an 11–10 epic victory.

The Angels and Giants clubbed more home runs (11) than had been hit in the first two games of any World Series, prompting both sides to suspect that the specially marked baseballs were harder, smaller and livelier than the ones used in the regular season. Anaheim shortstop David Eckstein, for instance, said he felt a difference in the balls as soon as he took infield practice before Game 1. Several of his teammates even cut open a Series ball, searching for evidence of a compositional change. (Results were inconclusive.)

Put away your scalpels, boys, because here's the real cushioned cork center of the matter: The World Series proved again that it's the surest thrill ride in sports. Ten of the last 16 Series games through Sunday had been decided by one run, and seven of them had been won in the winning team's last at bat, including the entertaining 21-run salute in Anaheim. The World Series does not disappoint, whether you've waited 17 years, like Bonds, or just 31 days, like 20-year-old Angels reliever Francisco Rodriguez.

FLURRY OF HITS Snow, an Angel from 1993 through '96, had a home run and four RBIs in his Anaheim homecoming.

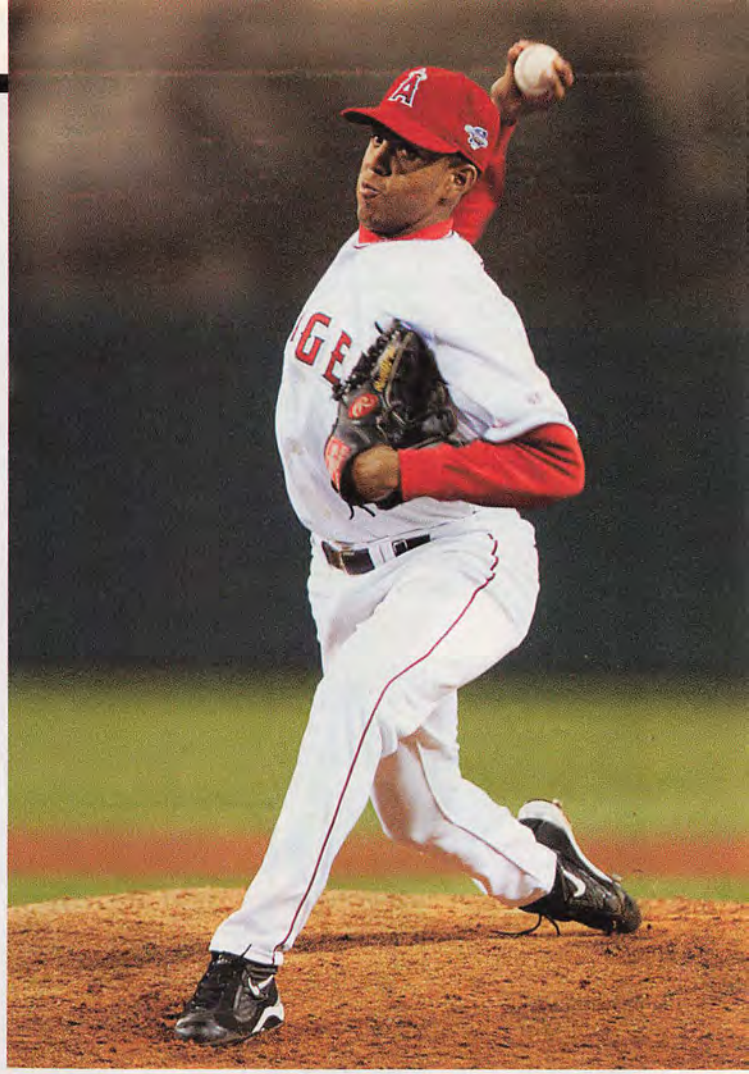
"There's nobody in our league who throws a slider like that," said Kent of Rodriguez.

Rodriguez, who has become known as K-Rod, is Heifetz with a killer slider, the prodigy who brought down the house on Sunday in his Series debut. He entered a riot of a baseball game—San Francisco led 9–8 after only five innings—and immediately established order by retiring all nine batters he faced (fanning four) with only 26 pitches, 22 of them strikes. His near-perfect form recalled Phil Simms in Super Bowl XXI (completing 22 out of 25 passes) or Bill Walton in the 1973 NCAA final (hitting 21 of 22 shots). In his first 13 postseason innings Rodriguez allowed just four hits and struck out 19.

"We were in good shape," said the Giants' Shawon Dunston, who fouled out against Rodriguez, "and then they brought in Superman."

"There's nobody in our league who throws a slider like that," said second baseman Jeff Kent, who was punched out on three pitches.

"He's right about that," agreed rightfielder Reggie Sanders, another three-pitch strikeout victim. "He hides the ball extremely well in his delivery, and the spin is so fast and tight that you can't recognize it. And then it has such a late break to it. We knew how well he was throwing, but we didn't know he was that good."



PERFECT ANGEL Francisco Rodriguez lived up to his K-Rod reputation, fanning four of the nine Giants he faced in Game 2.

In Rodriguez's 26 pitches the Giants swung and missed six times. They did so four times in 120 pitches from Anaheim's four other pitchers (Kevin Appier, John Lackey, Ben Weber and Troy Percival).

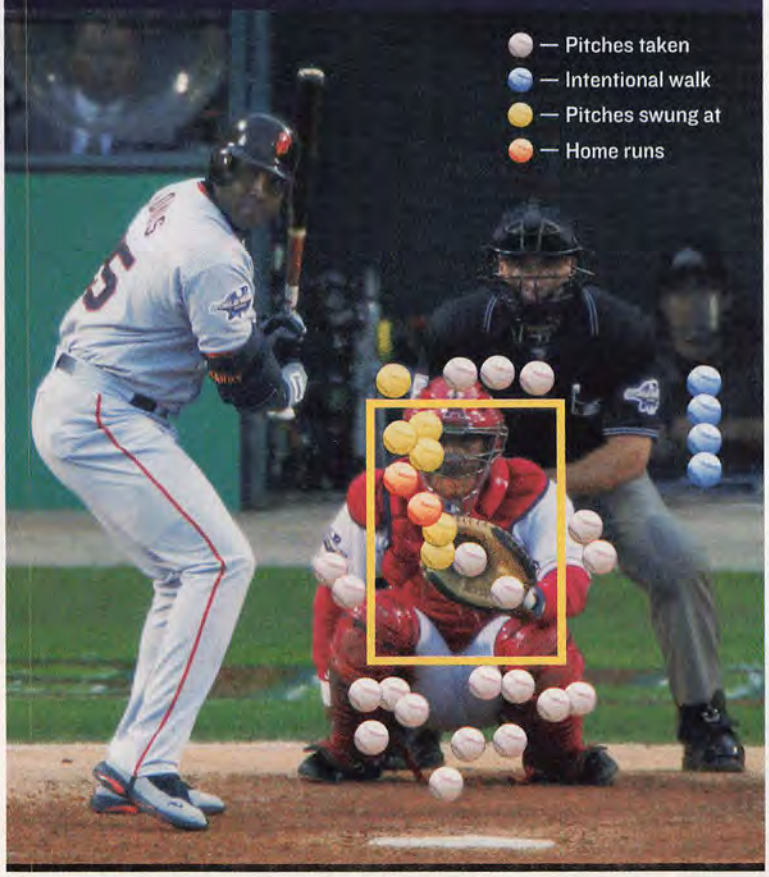
The Angels tied the score at 9 in the sixth and took the lead in the eighth when Salmon *(box, page 49)* socked his second two-run homer of the night, a two-out bomb off Felix (no relation, no slider) Rodriguez. Francisco Rodriguez became the youngest pitcher to win a World Series game and joined Randy Johnson as the only pitchers ever to win five games in one postseason. Johnson did so last year for the Arizona Diamondbacks, when, like Bonds, he made his World Series debut at age 38.

Like parts of a physics equation, Rodriguez and Bonds collided in the sixth inning for only one pitch. Rodriguez's acceleration times Bonds's mass equaled the force of one of the most exciting groundouts to first base you've ever seen, most likely foreshadowing more classic confrontations in this Series.

Every Bonds at bat figured to keep the Series on an emotional and strategic edge. The first two games left the Angels alternately giggling with wonder and slack-jawed with awe at his prowess. Including an intentional walk in Game 2 that backfired, Bonds saw 10 strikes in nine trips to the plate *(chart, page 48)*—even

Danger ZONE

Of the 32 pitches that the Angels threw to Barry Bonds in Games 1 and 2 of the World Series, 22 were called balls (68.8%). In his nine plate appearances Bonds swung his bat eight times, hitting two home runs, grounding out to first base twice and fouling off three pitches; he swung and missed once, for his only strikeout. He was walked four times, once intentionally.



CHUCK SOLOMON

though eight of his plate appearances occurred with no one on base. He put four balls in play, two of them home runs that traveled a combined 903 feet. "Oh, my goodness," Angels bench coach Joe Maddon said after Game 2. "Wow. It's freakish the way he's able to square up a ball going 97 miles an hour like it's nothing."

Last Friday, Black had gathered his pitchers around a conference table adjacent to the clubhouse to review the San Francisco hitters. He made sure to spend no more time talking about Bonds than about any other Giant, which made Black unique last week in Orange County. He told his pitchers, "You're going after Barry unless Mike [Scioscia] tells you not to. Stick to your strengths."

Black even delivered the message the next day to Bonds, his former teammate with the Giants. "Hey," Black told him at the batting cage before Game 1, "you're going to get pitches to hit." Black meant it in a lighthearted way, a wink at all the pitchers and managers who tiptoed around Bonds this year, walking him 216 times, postseason included. Bonds, deep into his pregame calm, didn't even bother responding—at least not until the second inning.

Angels starter Jarrod Washburn began the game with the persistence of a roofer with a nail gun, pounding 21 consecutive fastballs. He challenged Bonds with a 2-and-0 fastball in the upper half of the strike zone, the 17th pitch in that sequence. Bonds barely tipped it. Catcher Bengie Molina called for another fastball, this one down and away. Washburn missed terribly, and the ball hung belt-high on the inner half of the plate. "That's my favorite spot, right there," Bonds said.

The last light of day glowed orange, a theatrical twilight known to photographers as the magic hour, as the slugger rose to a moment as big as himself. His bat flashed like a cracking whip, launching the ball on a 418-foot sortie into a maintenance tunnel in rightfield. Seventeen years after he broke into the majors—among Hall of Famers only Walter Johnson waited longer to reach the Fall Classic (18 years)—Bonds became the oldest man ever to homer in his first World Series at bat.

"Yep, he's as good as they say," Washburn said later. *Yes, child, the stove top is hot.*

"You're looking at the living Babe Ruth," said Giants pitcher Jason Schmidt.

Back in San Francisco, Hall of Famer Willie Mays, watching on television, smiled. "When I saw it, I thought, There goes a load off his back," Mays said on Sunday. "What are they going to talk about now?" Mays played in four World Series and did not hit a home run in 71 at bats; his team lost three of those Series. Until this year Bonds had hit one homer in 97 postseason at bats while his team had lost all four of its playoff series.

"I got rid of the ghosts of the postseason when we beat the Braves," Bonds said, alluding to the Division Series win over the team that had knocked his club out of the playoffs three times.

Washburn, true to Black's wishes, continued to attack Bonds. He whiffed him in the fourth when Bonds uncharacteristically chased a high fastball that would have been ball four. He retired him too in the sixth, when Bonds grounded out on a first-pitch slider. But Washburn never made it out of that inning. Sanders laced a two-out, two-strike single, and J.T. Snow homered to put the Giants ahead 4–1.

Sanders and Snow combined for eight RBIs in the two games, reminding Anaheim pitchers that trouble lurks in the San Francisco lineup beyond Bonds's cleanup spot. In Game 2 the Angels held a 7–5 lead in the fifth inning when Scioscia ordered Bonds in-

The Angels were left alternately giggling with wonder and slack-jawed with awe at Bonds's prowess.

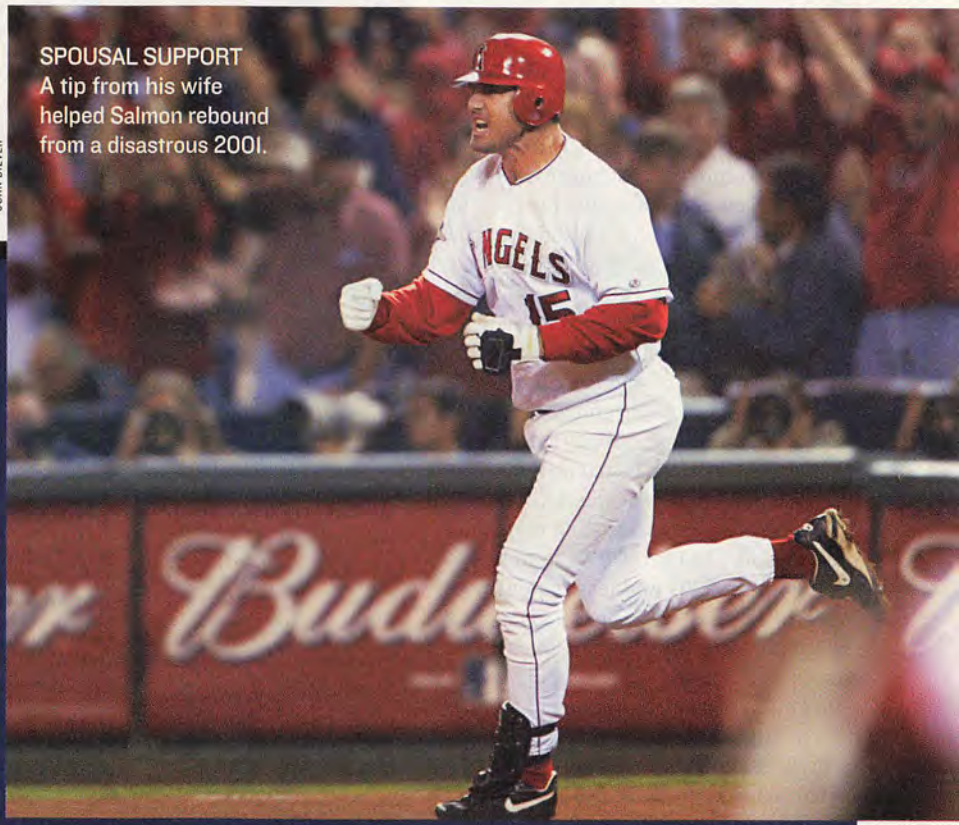
tentionally walked with a runner at second and one out. "We might have done the same with another great hitter, like [Jason] Giambi or Alex Rodriguez," Black said. "We didn't think it was that tough a call." But Benito Santiago, Snow, David Bell and Dunston all singled off Weber, driving home four runs.

Rodriguez faced Bonds with nobody on base and the Giants up by a run. "With Frankie," Black said, "Mike and I looked at each other for half a second, and he said, 'Hey, we're going after him.' We have complete faith in his stuff. Plus, Barry had never seen him before."

Bonds would get one more swing in Game 2, this time against Percival, Anaheim's hard-throwing closer, with two outs and the bases empty in the ninth. Everybody in the ballpark knew what Percival was going to throw. It was as if Bonds had stepped into the last batting cage at the local arcade, the one marked VERY FAST, and dropped a token into the slot. Bonds looked at one fastball, a ball, and immediately measured its pace. He connected with the next pitch, a 97-mph fastball, so hard that his black maple bat made a ringing sound that echoed through the ballpark. The homer sailed 485 feet, prompting a wide-eyed Salmon to exclaim in the dugout, "That's the farthest ball I've ever seen hit."

It was that kind of Series, a sprawling, lavish production made for the biggest stage and, at last, the biggest star. Bonds stood in front of his locker on Sunday, stripped to his comic-book superhero musculature except for a pair of shorts, and smiled—yes, smiled—in defeat. After all these years the World Series was everything he had a right to expect it to be. "Yes," he said, "it's a lot of fun right now."

Best of all was its promise to yield more. □



JOHN BIEVER

SPOUSAL SUPPORT
A tip from his wife helped Salmon rebound from a disastrous 2001.

Mighty KINGFISH

Tim Salmon is letting loose—so watch out

DAVID ECKSTEIN was about to receive the beating of his life. The Angels' shortstop was on first base when Tim Salmon clubbed the most dramatic home run of his career, a two-run shot in the eighth inning of Game 2 of the World Series. Suddenly Anaheim had an 11–9 lead over the Giants, and the diminutive Eckstein braced for what was coming next. "Take a look at the tape, you'll see me edging away from him," says Eckstein, who greeted Salmon at home plate with his customary exuberance. "I was scared. You don't want to be the one he lets out his aggression on."

Salmon, the rightfielder teammates call Kingfish, is known to celebrate his home runs with high fives and fist bumps so forceful that they would draw assault charges if delivered outside the stadium. "The football player in me comes out," he says.

Eckstein had good reason to quake. Salmon, who had singled twice, walked and hit another two-run homer in his earlier Game 2 plate appearances, had waited 10 years to celebrate a moment like this. After making his major league debut as a late-season call-up in 1992, he won the American League Rookie of the Year award the following season. The club's longest-tenured player, Salmon is the franchise leader in home runs (269) and RBIs (894). Entering October he had played the most games (1,388) of any active major leaguer who hadn't appeared in the postseason. "I've been watching things like this from my couch for a long time," said Salmon, still beaming nearly two hours after his game-winning homer. "You wonder, if you were at bat in that situation, whether you could do something like that."

A year ago he probably couldn't have. Salmon had surgery on his left shoulder before last season and spent most of 2001 trying to recover the muscle mass (about 30 pounds) and bat speed he had lost during his layoff. The result: a .227 average, 17 homers, a career-low 49 RBIs and a huge loss of confidence at the plate. "He was a mess," says hitting coach Mickey Hatcher. "It was a frustrating year for him."

Last spring Salmon arrived healthy and at his normal playing weight of 240 pounds, but he was still struggling early in the season. (He hit .192 in April.) That's when his wife, Marci, told him that when he used to hit well, his butt stuck out more in his stance. Salmon and Hatcher fished out video from 1997, when Salmon drove in a career-high 129 runs; sure enough, they saw, he had gotten away from the exaggerated, posterior-protruding crouch he had used then. Salmon adjusted his stance and honed his timing by taking hundreds of swings against a pitching machine that threw nothing but curveballs.

The adjustments worked. He hit .286 with 22 home runs and 88 RBIs in 2002 and was noticeably more animated on the field and in the clubhouse. "After last year I decided I was going to enjoy this and let my emotions out," Salmon says. "Some guys in here were shocked."

And, no doubt, sore. "You have to watch your hands after he hits a home run," says third baseman Scott Spiezio. "He'll break your fingers if you're not careful."

He may help put a world championship ring on one of those fingers, too. —*Stephen Cannella*

BY MICHAEL BAMBERGER

What's Up With JOE PA?

Penn State coach Joe Paterno is letting loose on refs and letting it rip on offense. Is that any way for a 75-year-old legend to act?

THE OLD MAN is running out of chances, and he knows it. There was a time when Joe Paterno didn't die a little death with every loss. "It's just one football game," he'd remind himself in the shower before heading home, where 40 or 50 people, Penn State donors and would-be donors, would assemble for Saturday night dinner. Once there was always a next week, always a next season. Now the legend is 75. He has coached football for 53 years. You have to figure he's *somewhere* in the fourth quarter of his coaching career.

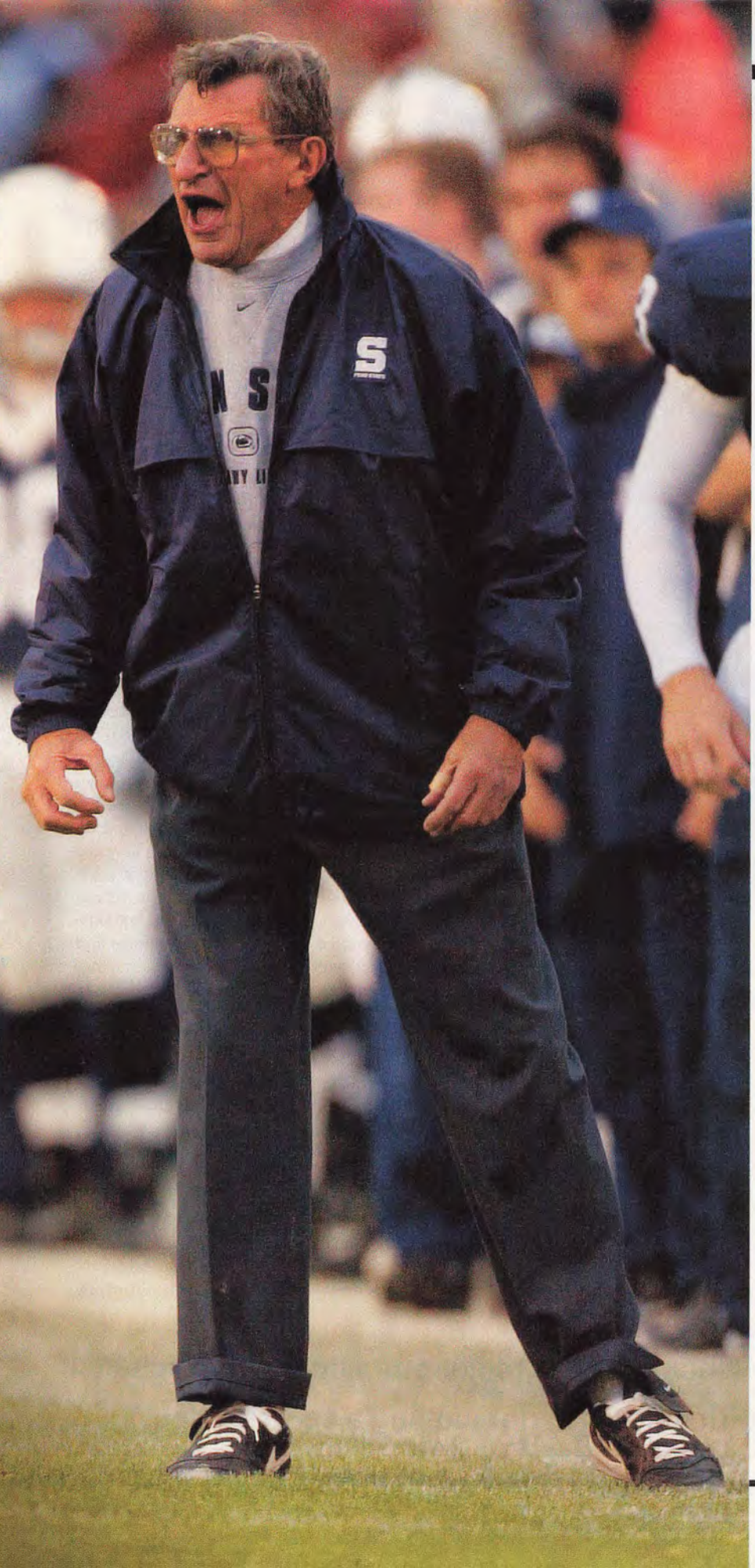
It's not as if he's shambling through his final years on the sideline, as did the great Eddie Robinson of Grambling, the alltime leader in career wins. Paterno is still wildly robust, faster than some of his offensive linemen, with better hair than most TV weathermen. He's funny. You remind him that nobody lives forever, and he says, "You only say that because nobody's ever done it." But the deep truth is that he knows the time is coming when he'll coach his final game, and now the losses sting more than they used to. "As I get older, I'm more patient with the kids and less patient with other things," he says. He has less patience for stupid questions, ridiculous NCAA rules, bad officiating.

In Paterno's ledger his Nittany Lions are 4–0 in Big Ten play and not what your newspaper shows them to be, which is 2–2 in the conference after overwhelming Northwestern last Saturday, homecoming day, in State College, Pa. Poor officiating, Paterno believes, helped seal the two Big Ten losses.

Penn State, 5–2 overall, won its first three games this year, then lost its conference opener at home to Iowa on Sept. 28, 42–35, in overtime. It was after that game that Paterno, jogging off the field with his players and coaches, saw head referee Dick Honig out of the corner of his glasses, went sprinting after him, grabbed the back of Honig's shirt to get his attention and told him in one choice sentence what he thought of the officiating crew's work. We hadn't seen Joe Paterno do that before. It brought to mind Woody Hayes of Ohio State, back in the day.

The following Saturday the Nittany Lions eked out a Big Ten win at Wisconsin. Seven

PHOTOGRAPHS BY AL TIELEMANS



BURNING BRIGHT Dreary weather for the homecoming game against Northwestern did little to dampen Paterno's passion.

days later Penn State, on the road again, endured another overtime conference loss, this time to Michigan, 27–24. Paterno believes that game was decided by a blown call with 40 seconds left in the fourth quarter, when a long Nittany Lions pass play to the Wolverines' 23-yard line was ruled out-of-bounds. A slow-motion video replay showed that Penn State receiver Tony Johnson was in bounds by at least a foot. Whether Johnson had possession of the ball is another question. In any event the Lions didn't have a chance to break the 21–21 tie with a countdown field goal.

For years, for decades, Paterno would have gone into coachspeak—*You get some calls, you don't get others. We had our chances. Nah, they don't need instant replay, 'cause cameras, they can be wrong too.* This time JoePa didn't do that. In the days after the Michigan game he had Penn State athletic director Tim Curley write a letter to Big Ten commissioner Jim Delaney, calling for a top-to-bottom review of conference officiating. Paterno also suspended his automatic dismissal of the idea of video replay for disputed calls. He questioned why three officials who live in Michigan were allowed to work the Michigan game. You would've thought you were listening to Oliver Stone, the director–conspiracy theorist. "The problem is, you've got a bunch of kids who are busting their butts to win a football game, working like dogs," Paterno said, "and I think you owe it to them to make sure the game is won by the players."

By last Friday, the day before his team faced Northwestern, Paterno was sounding contrite. "In 50 years I've never been in the situation I'm in now, in a controversy over whether a guy is a good official or a lousy official and who is appointing them," Paterno said. "Running down the field after the Iowa game, I don't regret that. All I wanted was to talk to the guy. Running my mouth about the officiating, I'm not sure I should have done that."

That's because, as Paterno and every student of the Paterno Way know, only losers complain about officiating. In 1966 Paul Levine was a sophomore sportswriter on the Penn State newspaper, *The Daily Collegian*, when Paterno was in his rookie year as the Lions' coach. Today Levine is a novelist and screenwriter in Los Angeles, with

FLYIN' LIONS Wideout Johnson and the newly unleashed offense are providing more thrills than past Penn State teams.

a life-sized cardboard cutout of Paterno gazing over his shoulder as he types. For 36 years Paterno has been Levine's ideal as a moral leader. "For Joe to complain publicly like that, he must have thought a real injustice had been done," Levine says.

It's unsettling, for Levine and countless others, to see Paterno do something out of character. "The whole point of the Penn State homecoming is that the world can be unraveling and you come back to State College and everything's the same," Levine says. "The Nittany Lion Inn is still serving its seafood buffet on Friday night; the trees and the buildings and the walkways are where they've always been; Joe Paterno is coaching the football team—and Joe Paterno does not change."

Penn State endured sub-.500 seasons in 2000 and '01, the only time Paterno has had consecutive losing teams, but there was not even the hint of a movement for Paterno to step down. There are three main reasons for that:

1) Paterno has preached for years that football ultimately is not about winning and losing but about building community, and his community believes him;

2) Paterno is the most powerful person on campus, and no person or committee that tried to force him to retire could survive the wrath of his supporters;

3) Paterno plays a huge role in the economic health of the university and the town.

And then there is this intangible: He makes the university better.

Late Friday afternoon, with a cold front pushing over Mount Nittany, the Penn State marching band was rehearsing for homecoming, on a practice field of its own. A little crowd had gathered to watch and listen and shiver. Off on the side the featured twirler of the Penn State marching band, Bobbie Jo Sullivan, a senior from Williamsport, Pa., was launching her baton 50 feet in the air and catching it flawlessly. She's a world-champion twirler. She grew up on the legend of Joe Paterno. She was interested in only one school. "Coach Paterno is like a presence over everything we do," she says. "He has character, he has fire, he has a good heart. You want to meet his standards." She's met him once.

Later that night Sullivan twirled her way down College Avenue in the homecoming parade, past College Pizza, which before locking its doors at 4 a.m. would sell more than 600 pizzas, close to its single-day record. "Half the businesses in town wouldn't be here if it weren't for Joe Paterno," says owner Dick Frasca. He was recruited by Paterno in 1966, when he was a hotshot quarterback coming out of nearby Altoona High. His mother served spaghetti to Paterno in her house, but Frasca wanted to leave his home state and signed with Kentucky. "Before Paterno they couldn't get city kids and suburban kids to come here. Look at how he's grown the place." In 1966 the student enrollment at the State College campus was 12,192; now it is more than 40,000. In '66 Beaver Stadium held 50,000 fans; now it holds 108,000.

Paterno and his wife, Sue, have pledged more than $4 million to the university, and he has raised far more. There's a library named for him. Early Saturday afternoon, with the Lions' rout of the Wildcats under way on a dank day, the Paterno Library was deeply silent, the sounds of turning

"I hope I know when it's time to get out. I don't want to go beyond the point where I'm not making a contribution."

"Coach Paterno is like a presence over everything we do here," says Sullivan. "You want to meet his standards."

pages absorbed by the thick carpeting, low ceilings and endless stacks. All the books by and about Joe Paterno had been checked out. A few students were scattered about, studying. A library staffer, Sam Umbriac, checked on the homecoming game every 10 minutes on the Internet. Scoreless; 7–0, State; 14–0; 21–0; 28–0. . . . From a nearby wall Joe and Sue Paterno gazed in Umbriac's direction from a portrait, smiling for posterity.

Maybe Paterno *will* go on forever. His legacy, of course, will. "I hope I know when it's time to get out. I'm not sure I will," says Paterno, who can cite names and plays from long-ago games as if he were doing a live TV broadcast. "It has nothing to do with whether we're winning or losing. We could win the rest of our games this year, and I could say I'm getting out. We could lose the rest of our games this year, and I could say I'm getting out."

He's saying he doesn't care if Bobby Bowden, the Florida State coach, passes him in career victories. Through Sunday, Bowden had 328 wins and Paterno 332, the most by a major college coach. (Robinson is in the stratosphere at 408.) "I'll do what's best for my family, myself and Penn State. I don't want to go beyond the point where I'm not making a contribution." He knows what happened to Alabama's Bear Bryant, who retired in December 1982 and died a month later. "I don't want to do that," Paterno says. "I don't want to retire and die." He's in the third year of a five-year contract. He has no hobbies. He's going nowhere. "He is god," says one longtime fan. "He is eternal."

He is the most old-school of the old-school coaches, yet flexible and modern and realistic. He doesn't use e-mail. He has no wires dangling from his head during the game. On game day he still rolls up his pants legs. He'd be fine with having an openly gay player on his team "as long as he wasn't aggressive in the locker room about it." He would like his team to be 100% steroid-free but cannot promise that it is, he says, because users can mask their use on urine tests too easily.

In the past year, after beginning the 2001 season with four consecutive losses, Paterno has taken daring steps to make the Nittany Lions a contemporary team on the field. For years Penn State thrived because of its outstanding linebackers and powerful running backs. The quarterback was the dutiful son who took the snap and handed off the ball. Midway through last season, however, Paterno gave the play-calling reins to his offensive coordinator, Fran Ganter, who in turn let loose freshman Zack Mills, the unpredictable and dynamic quarterback. He runs! He scrambles! Sometimes he even takes shotgun snaps! Hard to believe but true at old Penn State. It's a new day.

The Lions defeated Northwestern 49–0 on Saturday, before 108,853 fans at Beaver Stadium, and on Sunday they moved up to No. 18 in the AP poll. This week they visit Ohio State. If Paterno had any complaints about the officiating in Saturday's game, he kept them to himself. □

THE LONG RUN In his 37th season at Penn State, Paterno appears in no hurry to jog away from the job of a lifetime.

Horse POWER

With War Emblem and a flock of fleet 2-year-olds entered in the Breeders' Cup, trainer **Bob Baffert,** like him or not, is the king of his world

BY TIM LAYDEN

IT IS not just a house that Bob Baffert has built for himself and his new wife in the long shadows of the San Gabriel Mountains in Southern California, not far from Santa Anita Race Track. It is a 5,000-square-foot, six-bedroom monument to the fleeting moments that have made the man a star. In the foyer stands a 20-foot-long glass-enclosed trophy case filled with the spoils of horse races large and larger. On Baffert's office wall are the bridles worn by Real Quiet, Silver Charm and Point Given, three of the horses he has trained to victories in Triple Crown races. In a game room on the second floor are massive brass-framed photographs of Baffert in winner's circles. Scattered around the house are Baffert-related cartoons from the *Daily Racing Form*.

Here is a man who pines for fast horses and big moments; the rest of life is just filler. "All we do is live from one big horse to the next," says Baffert, 49. Two decades ago he was a quarter horse trainer running hard and partying long in the minor leagues. He conquered that world and took on thoroughbreds, winning a Breeders' Cup race in 1992, finishing second in the Kentucky Derby in '96, then winning the Derby in '97, '98 and 2002. Cameras found his snowy white hair and cool sunglasses; microphones recorded his bons mots. "My fault," Baffert says. "I was born with a personality." He became a celebrity, the face of his sport, so recognizable that for the last two summers he has been paid $50,000 to bring his big horse—in 2001 Point Given, this year Kentucky Derby and Preakness winner War Emblem—to Monmouth Park on the New Jersey shore for the Haskell Invitational. Baffert's job is not only to deliver a fit horse but also to sign autographs.

"Look how most trainers act when they get on TV," says Eoin Harty, who was Baffert's assistant from 1991 to '99 and now trains 2-year-olds for Dubai-based Godolphin Racing. " 'Yup. . . . Nope. . . . [Here he goes into full *Hee Haw* mode.] He shore is a nahce horse.' Everybody gets his 15 minutes. You can do what most people do, or you can do something different. Bob did something different."

While fame and success have made Baffert rich, they have also made him the biggest target in his sport. "He's so loose it's almost beyond belief," says trainer Nick Zito, a two-time Derby winner. "The old-time guys, they want a more classic-type horseman." Baffert takes a whipping when his horses fail or his life turns tabloid, as it did when he married the former Jill Moss on Aug. 3 after a four-year romance that began while he was married, with four children. And when critics cut Baffert, he bleeds.

"Bobby is very sensitive to stuff that's said about him," says Mike Pegram, who financed Baffert's start in thoroughbreds in 1989 and for whom Baffert has trained numerous horses, including '97 Derby and Preakness winner Real Quiet. "Criticism eats at him. It also makes him more competitive."

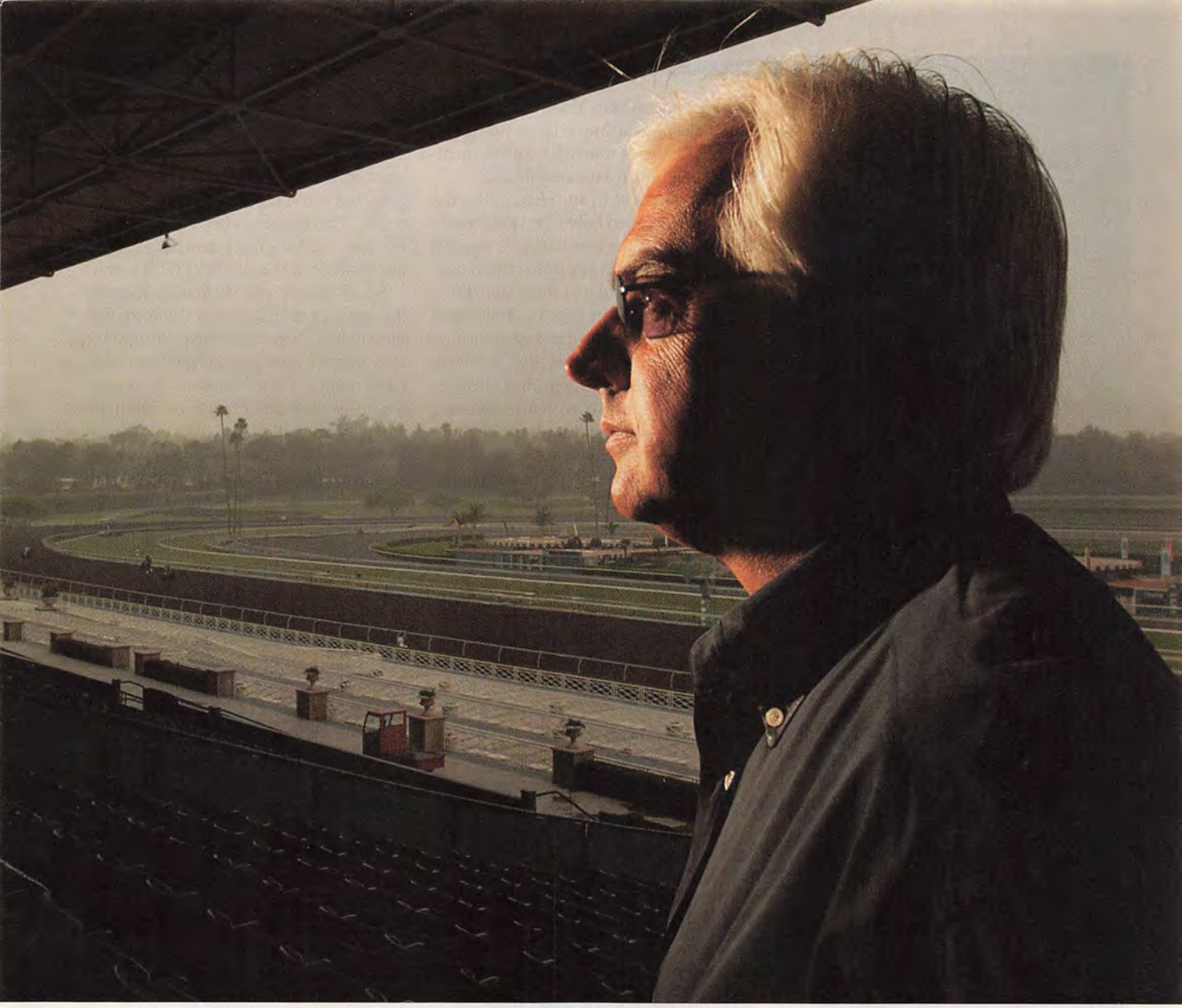
HEINZ KLUETMEIER (SILVER CHARM)

MASTER IN HIS HOUSE Among the heavy hitters trained by Baffert, here at Santa Anita, are (from top) Point Given, Real Quiet, War Emblem and Silver Charm.

For Baffert, the intoxication of winning at the highest level is worth any cost. "Every year you hope for a lifetime season with one horse," he says. "Real Quiet, Silver Charm—that's what keeps you going."

On Saturday, Baffert will send at least half a dozen bona fide contenders to the post at the Breeders' Cup at Arlington Park near Chicago, including War Emblem in the Classic. He will also enter 2-year-old colts Bull Market, Kafwain and Vindication and 2-year-old fillies Atlantic Ocean, Composure and Santa Catarina *(chart, page 62)*. It is a rich assortment of runners,

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BILL FRAKES



and Baffert will watch the young ones with an eye toward spring. "The Breeders' Cup is a great TV show," he says, "but if you win a Breeders' Cup race, you're not going to cry. You win the Derby, you cry like a baby."

It is now that the race to Louisville begins. Baffert has nearly 50 2-year-olds in his barn, so numbers are in his favor, but he had almost as many last year and none got to the Derby. He won it because he persuaded Saudi Arabian prince Ahmed bin Salman of the Thoroughbred Corporation to buy War Emblem for $900,000 three weeks before the race. It was a bold play, and there might never be another quite like it.

In July bin Salman died of heart disease at age 43. Baffert and the prince were kindred spirits, big kids who loved to play with expensive toys. "He liked the horses and the competition," says Baffert. "Sometimes I put my hand on a horse in the winner's circle, and I just want to say, 'Thanks for running your guts out.' The prince was like that too."

Baffert lost more than a jolly friend when the prince died. He lost a benefactor who trusted him so much that in 1999 he told Baffert to pick out and race the best five horses training at the prince's California farm. One of those was Point Given, who won the 2001 Preakness and Belmont Stakes and whom Baffert (whose license plate reads PTGIVEN) calls his best horse ever. "You dream about having a client whom you can call and tell, 'We need to buy this horse,' and he says, 'Go buy him, no matter how much he costs,' " says Baffert. "I have good clients, but they can spend only so much. I bought Real Quiet for $17,000, so you can win at all levels. But the more you spend, the less luck you need." He pauses. "I need another guy with deep pockets, and they're hard to find."

With expensive horses and cheap ones, Baffert has proved himself a skilled trainer. Take War Emblem. At least two prominent owner-trainer combinations turned down opportunities to buy him last spring, in part because he has bone chips in both ankles and one knee. Baffert didn't blink. In three weeks, using tough love and a lip cord, he turned an ill-tempered colt into a Derby winner; now, if War Emblem wins the Breeders' Cup Classic, he will surely be Horse of the Year. Baffert is humble about the achievement. "It was a challenge to figure him out," he says. But there the humility ends: "That's my strongest point as a trainer, figuring out horses. I've seen most of the

problems horses have. That's the thing with people like me and Wayne Lukas [also a former quarter horse trainer]; we're overqualified for this job. It's too easy for us."

Yet he works at it, and therein lies the disconnect between Public Bob and Private Bob. In front of the lens Baffert is worldly, glib and cocksure. Away from it he is one-dimensional, fretful and insecure. "I'm a very needy person," he says. His Hollywood look is accidental: The hair began turning white when he was in his 20s; he wears sunglasses because of severe dust allergies, a curse for somebody with an office in a barn. His TVs haul in hundreds of channels, yet they are usually tuned to TVG, a horse-racing network. "We're not talking about a guy with a lot of outside interests," says Bill Baffert, his older brother.

Bob's second wife embraces his world. "Without Jill, I could not function," he says. When they met, Baffert was a rising star in racing and Moss was an anchor on a Louisville morning TV show. They courted in plain view of the backstretch community, which is as hidebound and judgmental as a small New England town. "We made mistakes, lots of them," says Jill, 31. "We live with those mistakes every day of our lives."

Baffert was divorced from his first wife, Sherry, in August 2001. "My ex-wife is a good person," he says. "She's great with our kids. But our lives were on two different pages. What happens when you go through life, then suddenly meet somebody and you just really click? I couldn't let Jill get away."

Sherry Baffert, who declined to speak for this article, lives in Southern California with the children, three boys ranging in age from 11 to 16 and a nine-year-old girl. Each child has a room in Bob's home and visits every other week and for extended periods in the summer. Bill Baffert, who remains close to Sherry and the children, says, "It was a tough situation for everybody, but they're all good."

On a fall morning not long ago, Bob watched at his barn as War Emblem was walked along the shedrow. (The Breeders' Cup will be the horse's last race; he has been sold to the Japanese syndicate that owned '89 Derby and Preakness winner Sunday Silence, who died last summer.) War Emblem seemed almost docile, as if transformed from his rancorous past. "Somebody told him sushi means cold horsemeat in Japanese," says Baffert. Always with a joke.

He stroked War Emblem's coal-black coat. Soon one big horse will be gone; the search for another already has begun. Not because Baffert wants one. Because he needs one, the way he needs oxygen to breathe. □

BAFFERT'S BOUNTY

At Saturday's Breeders' Cup in Chicago, trainer Bob Baffert plans to saddle not only Kentucky Derby and Preakness winner War Emblem but also six 2-year-old fillies and colts, including Vindication *(left)*.

HORSE	RACE	OWNER	SKINNY
War Emblem	Classic	The Thoroughbred Corporation	Faces challenge from Came Home, who beat him on Aug. 25 in the Pacific Classic, and handicap stickout Evening Attire
Atlantic Ocean	Juvenile Fillies	The Thoroughbred Corporation	Purchase price of $1.9 million was highest ever for a 2-year-old filly at an auction
Bull Market	Juvenile	James McIngvale	Speedy front-runner finished a gutty second to stablemate Kafwain in Norfolk Stakes on Oct. 5 at Santa Anita
Composure	Juvenile Fillies	Bob and Beverly Lewis	Classy filly must beat favorite Storm Flag Flying; owners have twice won the Derby
Kafwain	Juvenile	The Thoroughbred Corporation	Beat Bull Market in a stretch duel in Norfolk Stakes; will try to do same to favorite Sky Mesa
Santa Catarina	Juvenile Fillies	Bob and Beverly Lewis	Finished second by two lengths to Storm Flag Flying in the Frizette at Belmont on Oct. 5
Vindication	Juvenile	Padua Stables	Baffert's best 2-year-old; dark bay son of Seattle Slew is three for three this year

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TAHOE Z71 **LIKE A ROCK**

All BUSINESS

The Eagles' dominant defense is led by cornerback **Troy Vincent**, who works as hard at making money as he does at making plays

BY JOSH ELLIOTT

HIS FISTS full of asparagus stalks and shade in short supply, Troy Vincent would gaze at the venerable brick manor across the road and get to thinking about the future. He was just a young teen working the fields for $2.25 an hour at Lang's farm in Yardley, Pa., a couple of miles across the Delaware River from his home in Trenton, N.J., but the future Philadelphia Eagles cornerback already craved life's finer things. That big house near the fields, with its 14 wooded acres, winding driveway and wrought-iron fence, was something he could get used to. He had felt that way for years, ever since his mother, Alma, first took him to Yardley for Halloween—the night they left their decaying urban streets for the spoils of suburban trick-or-treating. "It was one of those houses that gave the *big* candy bars," he says. "I just knew I wanted to live like that, but it would mean some hard work. I'd always had jobs as a kid—selling watermelons in Trenton, then working at Lang's, and washing dishes at Pizza Hut. Nobody was going to give me a good life. I had to earn it."

With boundless enthusiasm and disdain for the measly 40-hour work week, Vincent has spent his splendid 11-year NFL career—the first four with the Miami Dolphins, who took him out of Wisconsin with the seventh pick of the 1992 draft, and the last seven with the Eagles—matching his on-field success with business and charitable ventures that are equally rewarding. Vincent also serves as one of the NFL's wise elders, speaking to young players at league-held seminars on the importance of sound financial planning and preparing for life after football.

He is, in fact, nothing if not in demand. Eltekon, the financial-services company Vincent started with Eagles cornerback Bobby Taylor, veteran wideout Cris Carter (who on Monday came out of retirement to sign with the Miami Dolphins) and college friend Mark Mangum, has him in an office three days a week and returning calls at all hours. "He's always working on something away from the field," says Eagles free safety Brian Dawkins, who was drafted by Philadelphia in 1996, the year Vincent arrived. "He's too busy. It's amazing how much he does away from the game and then how good he is on Sunday. I always say I want to be just like him, only without all the phone bills."

At 31 Vincent is one of the league's elite all-around corners and the steady leader of perhaps the NFL's best secondary. Fresh off a bye week, the Eagles' defense held the

AL TIELEMANS

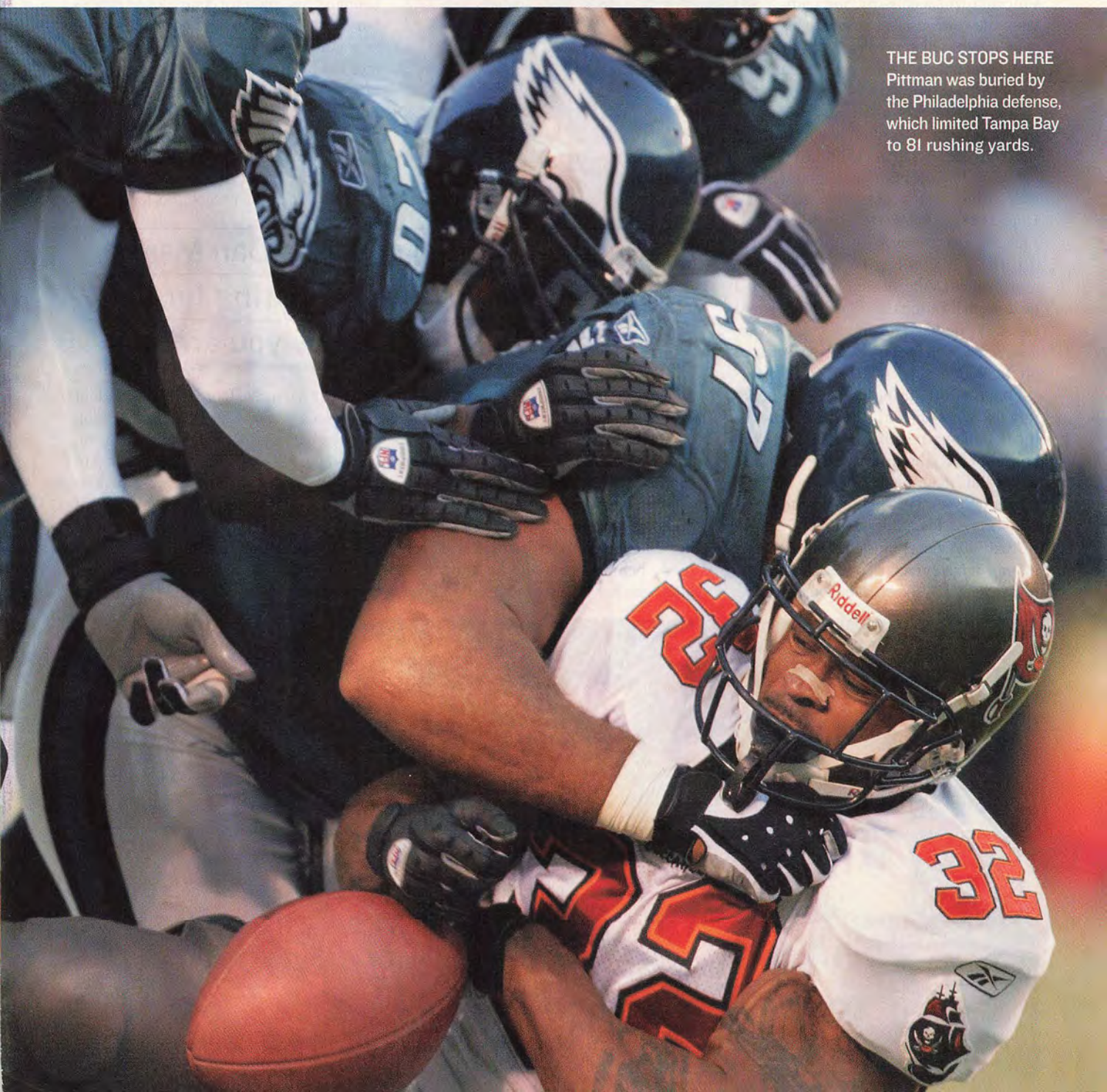
BOB ROSATO

NETWORKING The outgoing Vincent, who watches endless game tape, likes to learn everything he can about an opponent.

Tampa Bay Buccaneers offense without a touchdown in a 20–10 victory on Sunday at Veterans Stadium. The secondary never let the Bucs find a rhythm, harassing quarterbacks Brad Johnson and Rob Johnson (23 for 38, 155 yards combined), with Vincent shackling wideout Keyshawn Johnson (three catches for 38 yards).

At 6' 1" and 200 pounds, with 4.3 speed, Vincent is the rare corner who can punish a wideout as well as run with him, talents that are at a premium in Philadelphia's aggressive, blitz-heavy schemes. "He's out on an island in that defense, especially on the left side, where teams throw more often, and he's as good as it gets," says Houston Texans offensive coordinator Chris Palmer. "It's clear he's done his homework." Indeed, despite his estimable physical gifts, Vincent would rather jump routes and go for interceptions than make big hits. He led the Eagles in interceptions for the last five seasons and was named to the last three Pro Bowls.

Behind this success is maniacal film study, a habit—no, make that a compulsion—that has Vincent at the team's facility during the season by 8 a.m., popping sunflower seeds and digesting the offense of that week's opponent. He often pulls his defensive mates aside to tell them about tendencies of the enemy receivers, information that will lead to interceptions, "and he's usually right," Dawkins says. "He'll tell me to make an adjustment, and sure enough, I'll get a pick." Says Bucs wideout Keenan McCardell, "You can tell he studies his opponents. When you face him, you have to be on your game because he's going to know everything you do."



THE BUC STOPS HERE
Pittman was buried by the Philadelphia defense, which limited Tampa Bay to 81 rushing yards.

Even the Philadelphia offense benefits: Before a 31–9 win over Tampa Bay in last season's wild-card playoffs, Vincent told receiver James Thrash to sell the Bucs' defensive backs on an outside route, then get inside quickly and release. Thrash used that tip to make a 21-yard catch that set up the Eagles' decisive touchdown.

If Vincent charged a fee for the locker room advice he doles out, he could retire tomorrow. Some players seek his business acumen or investment tips: In addition to Eltekon, Vincent owns a construction company and co-owns a day spa with his wife, Tommi. Other players seek spiritual guidance, and some can't seem to do without him.

"I've asked him about my dog [Vincent owned a kennel when he was with the Dolphins], about what bricks to use on my house, about everything," says defensive end Hugh Douglas. When Douglas called Vincent in early May to say he was about to drive a $300,000 Bentley off the lot, the ever-prudent Vincent said he thought it'd be a foolish purchase. "See, that's why I called!" Douglas exclaimed. "You always keep it real with me, Troy!" Douglas passed on the Bentley.

"It's the little things we do that separate us," says Vincent. "Everyone goes to the mandatory meetings, so what are you going to do above and beyond that? When I'm watching film of a guy I'm covering that week early in the morning, I feel good because I know he's home sleeping."

"Troy sets an example without being showy," says coach Andy Reid. "He's a great listener, and he's helpful with the young guys. He's like a grandfather in the locker room. I feel lucky to have him here."

TACKLING PAPERWORK Vincent spends part of his week dealing with his business interests.

PETER GREGOIRE

CORNERED Vincent pulled down Pittman for one of his three tackles on Sunday and helped keep Keyshawn Johnson in check.

> "I learned early, from guys like Dan Marino and Bernie Kosar, that preparing for life after football begins the day you arrive."

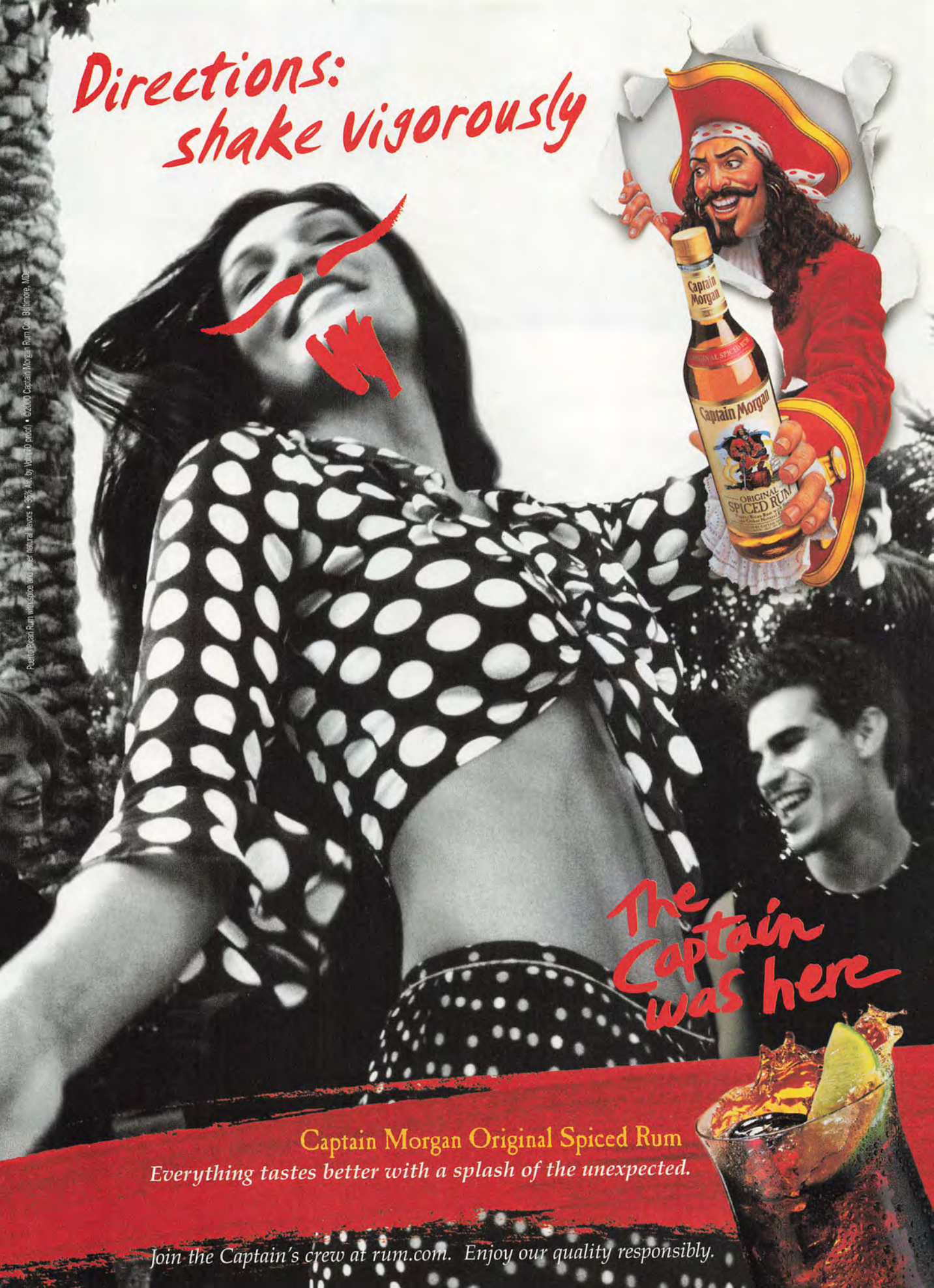
Vincent probably feels lucky to be there as well, considering the myriad pitfalls of a childhood in east Trenton's squalid Wilbur section. He grew up dreaming of the NBA and played basketball—occasionally for free shoes in games sponsored by rival drug dealers, he says—in the Garden, a fenced-in, blacktop court in the drug-infested park directly behind the home he and Alma shared with her parents. (Vincent declines to talk about his father, saying, "I was raised in a single-parent home.") Concerned about Troy's lackluster performance in school and the neighborhood influences, Alma moved Troy to Bucks County, Pa., before the seventh grade. He attended school there for three years, the last at Pennsbury High.

However, living expenses soon overwhelmed Alma, who was working as a corrections officer at a youth detention center, and they returned to Trenton for Troy's sophomore year. "When he had to go back, we all started crying," says Jacqueline Leonard, his guidance counselor at Pennsbury. "We knew if he went back to Trenton, he was going to be lost." The following summer Linda and James Bodley, the parents of Troy's good friend at Pennsbury, James Bodley Jr., invited Troy to live with them during the next two school years.

At the start of his senior year the Bodleys told Vincent that he had to find something productive to do after school. So, for the first time, he tried tackle football. One standout season later he was off to Wisconsin. "Going to Pennsbury and then living in Madison, with all their diversity and different ways of thinking, meant everything to me," says Vincent, who also lettered in basketball and track at Pennsbury. "Most of all, it helped me appreciate where I'm from."

He returns weekly to his old neighborhood, visiting with longtime friends and

AL TIELEMANS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Missing Persons

Tampa Bay's offense continues to struggle because Jon Gruden doesn't have the personnel to make his system work

THE BUCCANEERS have changed coaches, offensive coordinators and plans of attack, and if you listen closely enough, their excuses have a different ring too. But in the wake of a 20–10 loss to the Eagles on Sunday, Tampa Bay's fourth straight setback against Philadelphia, the Bucs' offense looks as feeble as ever.

Tampa Bay was unable to sustain drives, and the play-calling lacked imagination—the same deficiencies that led to Tony Dungy's firing last January. The Bucs had only 207 total yards, committed two turnovers and allowed six sacks. Their touchdown came on linebacker Derrick Brooks's 11-yard fumble return.

In recent years it was easy to blame Dungy's conservatism—Tampa Bay never finished higher than 21st in the league in total offense during his six seasons—and when the organization paid the Raiders a king's ransom to hire away offensive-minded coach Jon Gruden, it was assumed that the Bucs would finally have an offense to rival their high-powered defense.

But this team doesn't have the personnel to execute Gruden's West Coast attack. The receivers don't have enough speed, and a mediocre line can't protect immobile quarterback Brad Johnson or open running lanes for Michael Pittman and Mike Alstott. This unit was built to preserve leads, not win shootouts.

The bottom line is, Tampa Bay has to establish a rushing game before Gruden's scheme will click—it was key to his four successful seasons in Oakland. Looking to add some pop to the ground game, the Bucs in the off-season signed the free agent Pittman (late of the Cardinals). Still, they rank 25th in the league in rushing yards per game (93.0) and 28th in yards per attempt (3.6). With such a predictable offense, Johnson faces heavy pressure, including lots of blitzing, and his receivers find the middle of the field congested by defenders. "It would be nice to run after the catch," says wideout Keyshawn Johnson, "but every time I get the ball, I have three or four guys around me. I thought [this offense] was getting beyond that."

Early on, some of Tampa Bay's mistakes—missed assignments, bad reads, poor timing—could be attributed to the fact that there were a dozen or so new players on offense. "Playing together helps any offense, but we're seven games into the season," says wideout Keenan McCardell, who played for the Jaguars last season. "We need some chemistry, and we need it right now." —*Jeffri Chadiha*

BOB ROSATO

ATTENTION-GETTER Keyshawn Johnson (19), who has one touchdown catch in 2002, always draws a crowd.

hounding teens to finish school, to get those job applications out. He sits on the benches that a few years back he paid to have installed outside the Garden. (His donations, along with the money he has contributed for the park's upkeep, explain why the city wanted to rename the park after him; instead it bears the name of Jefferson Vincent, in memory of Troy's grandfather.) When looking for a home for Eltekon, Vincent eschewed Philly office space for a corner building just blocks from Wilbur. He also works out regularly in the gleaming weight room at Trenton High, which he refurbished at a cost of $50,000. (He made an identical donation to Pennsbury High.) "It's good for the kids to see someone who made it and then came back, gave back," Vincent says. "They see what hard work at their age can mean over the long term."

Such has been the thrust of several talks he's given to NFL rookies in recent years. "I learned early [with the Dolphins], from guys like Dan Marino and Bernie Kosar, that preparing for life after football begins the day you arrive," he says. "It has to, because the average NFL career is about two years. Two years? That's not a career, that's a job at Burger King during the summers."

Still, Vincent is acutely aware that, spartan work ethic notwithstanding, everyone needs a little divine providence, as the goodwill of the Bodleys was for him. It's why he and Tommi distribute gift certificates outside Trenton-area supermarkets at Thanksgiving and donate new clothing and blankets to homeless shelters at Christmas. It's also why they take their three children—daughter Desiré, 14 (Tommi's child from a previous relationship), and sons Troy Jr., 5, and Taron, 18 months—with them on their charitable outings. "Kids don't do what we tell them to do, they do what they see us do," Vincent says. "So I have to live the lifestyle I'm preaching."

As he speaks, he turns and looks at the house he and Tommi purchased in Yardley six years ago, on a tip from Linda Bodley. He shakes his head as if in disbelief, then goes silent. "My kids need to see what hard work is," he finally says. "They need to see how fortunate they are to have all that they have." With that, he begins the leisurely walk through his wrought-iron gate and up the winding driveway, past the wooded grove to his right. The front door of the brick manor swings wide, and Troy Jr. bounds across the lawn to give his father a hug.

Across the road Lang's asparagus fields are long gone, replaced by a housing development, but you can be sure little Troy will be hearing about them soon enough. □

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29* **RB Maurice Clarett, Ohio State (8–0)**
Rushed 30 times for 133 yards in 19–14 win at Wisconsin; leads Big Ten with 140 ypg, 13 TDs
NEXT GAME: Oct. 26 vs. Penn State, 3:30 p.m. ET, ABC regional broadcast

23 **QB Seneca Wallace, Iowa State (6–2)**
4-of-22 passing for 43 yards, 3 INTs in 49–3 loss at Oklahoma; averaging 246 ypg total offense
NEXT GAME: Oct. 26 at Texas, 3:30 p.m. ET, ABC regional broadcast

11 **RB Avon Cobourne, West Virginia (5–2)**
Ran 28 times for 108 yards in 34–7 win vs. Syracuse; fourth consecutive 1,000-yard season
NEXT GAME: Oct. 26 vs. Miami, Noon ET, ESPN2

6 **QB Philip Rivers, N.C. State (8–0)**
26-of-37 passing for season-high 364 yards, 2 TDs in 24–22 win vs. Duke; ACC-best 251.9 ypg
NEXT GAME: Oct. 26 at Clemson, 7:45 p.m. ET, ESPN

5 **QB Byron Leftwich, Marshall (5–1)**
Completed 23 of 35 passes for 275 yards, 2 TDs in 24–7 win vs. Troy State; 17 TDs this season
NEXT GAME: Oct. 26 at Central Michigan, 1 p.m. ET, ESPN Plus

RB Larry Johnson, Penn State (5–2)
23 carries for school-record 257 yards, 2 TDs in 49–0 win vs. Northwestern; 125.1 ypg in '02
NEXT GAME: Oct. 26 at Ohio State, 3:30 p.m. ET, ABC regional broadcast

HANDICAPPING THE HUNT FOR THE HEISMAN

Here's what college fans are saying about their favorite players on the message board at www.voteheisman.com.

"[Louisville QB] Dave Ragone excels in every facet of the game. He should still be considered in the hunt." — *Evan Spalding, Elizabethtown, Ky.*

"[Virginia Tech RB] Lee Suggs has broken the Big East record for career TDs in less than three full seasons." — *Jonathan Bayne, Salem, Va.*

"[Iowa RB] Fred Russell reminds me of Barry Sanders with his cutback ability and quickness." — *Chris Butzke, Urbandale, Iowa*

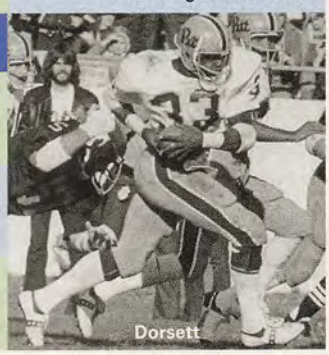
"QB Josh Harris leads the nation in points generated (25.7 per game) and has Bowling Green in both Top 25 polls." — *Matt Brotzki, Bowling Green, Ohio*

HEISMAN HEROES FLASHBACKS

QB Davey O'Brien, TCU *On Oct. 29, 1938, the Mighty Mite led a 39–7 thrashing of previously unbeaten Baylor with 236 passing yards and three second-half TD tosses. O'Brien threw 19 TDs in '38 as the Horned Frogs went undefeated.*

RB Tony Dorsett, Pittsburgh *On Oct. 23, 1976, Dorsett became Division I-A's top alltime rusher with a 180-yard, three-TD game in a 45–0 win vs. Navy. His totals for the season (1,948 yards) and career (6,082) set NCAA records.*

RB Herschel Walker, Georgia *On Oct. 30, 1982, Walker rushed for a season-best 219 yards and two TDs in a 34–3 win vs. Memphis State. The junior's 5,259 career yards set an NCAA record for three seasons, and his teams were 33–3.*


Dorsett

AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

Go to www.voteheisman.com through Dec. 2 to participate in official balloting and comment on the candidates. Compiled by Jordan Hyman

*Percentage of fans' first-place votes through Oct. 20. Check local listings for games to be broadcast in your area. © 2002 Time Inc.

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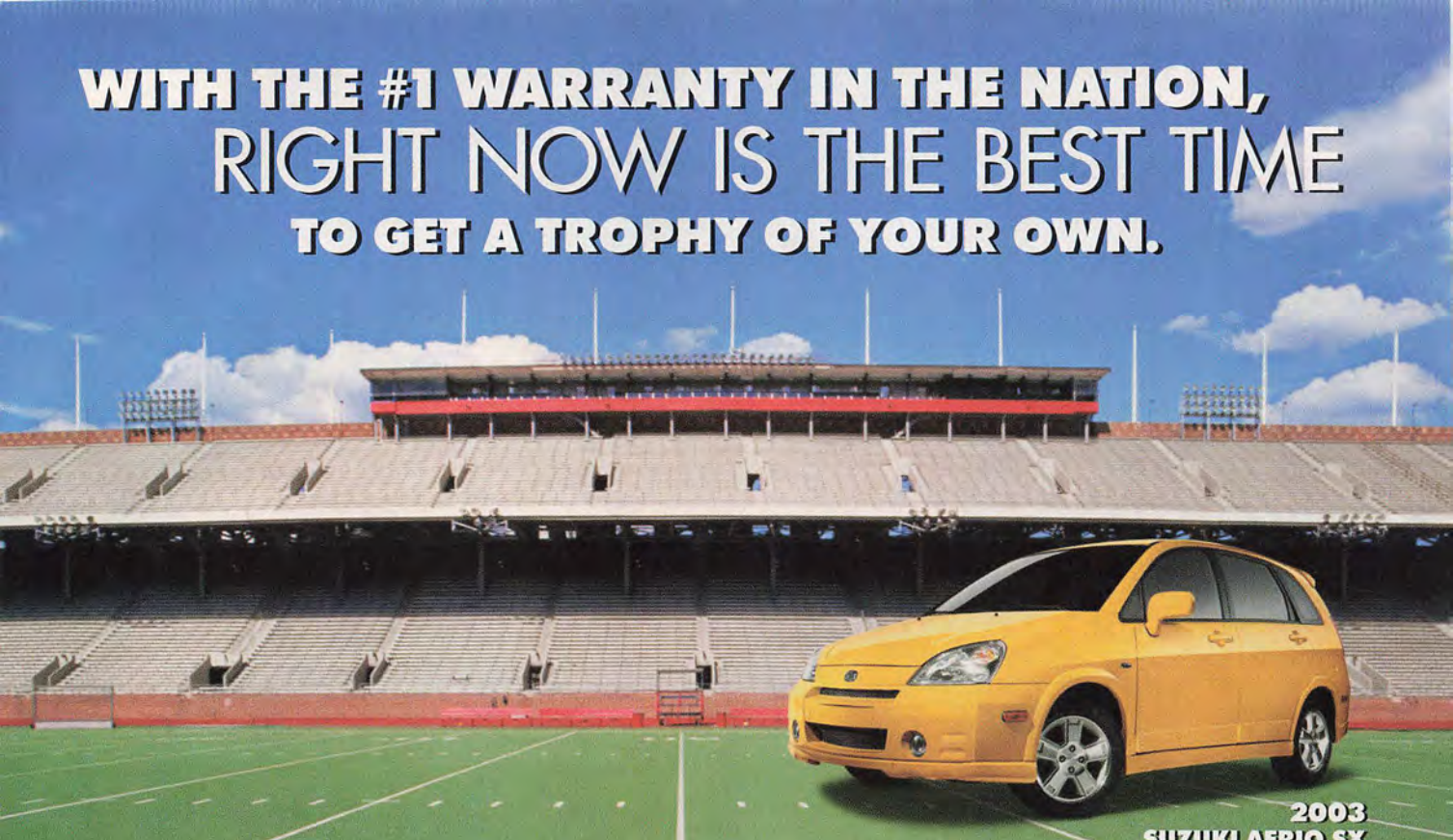

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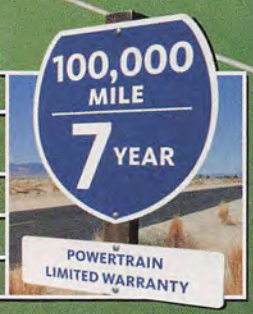

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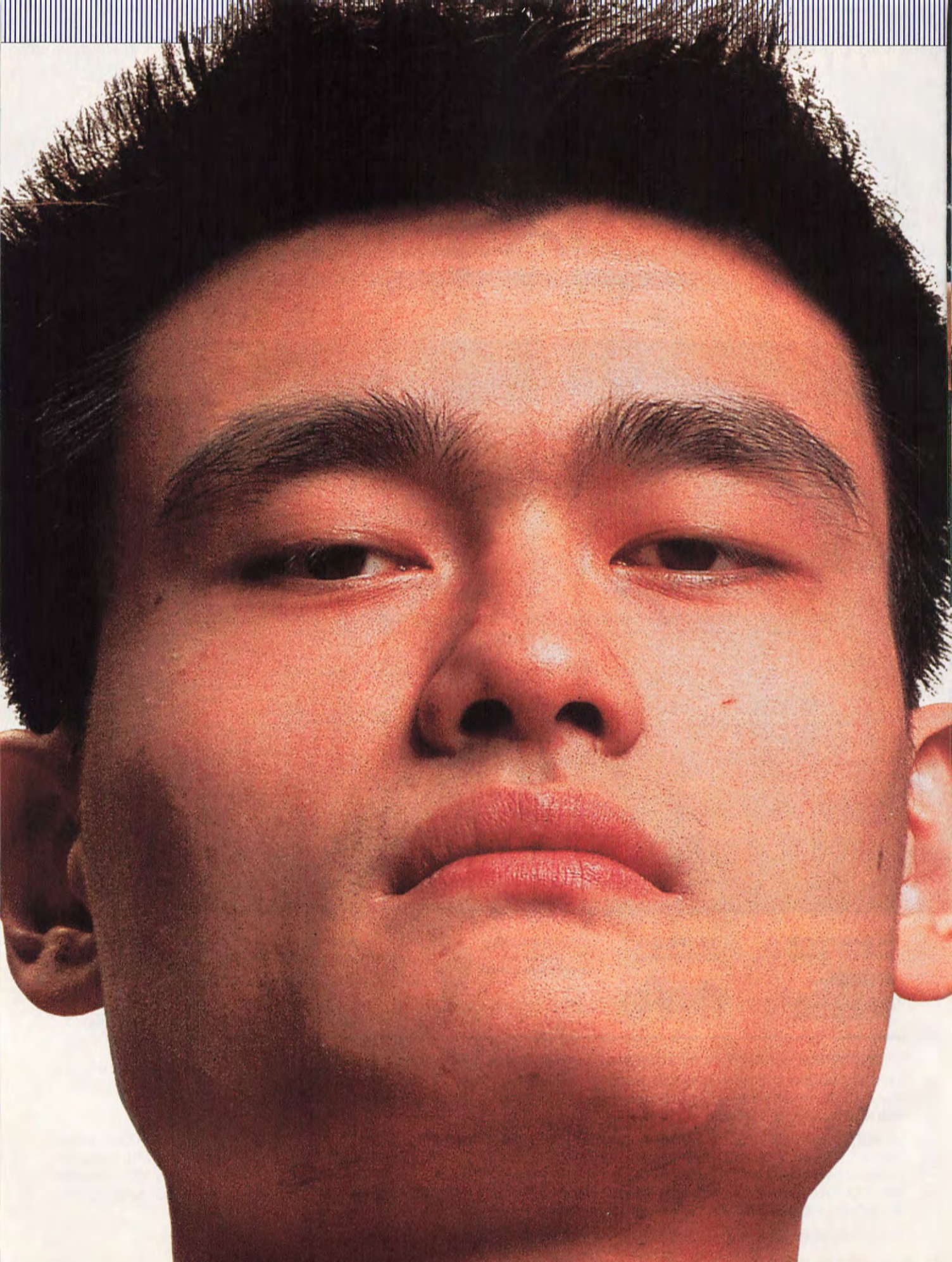


The New Mr. Big

The search for an answer to Shaq continues. Can the latest entry, mammoth Rockets rookie **Yao Ming**, measure up?

BY IAN THOMSEN

AT 7' 5" AND 296 pounds, Yao Ming could have scored his 32.4 points per game last season in the Chinese basketball league the easy way, dropping them into the bucket like an apple picker on a ladder. So why did he often hoist jumpers from 18 feet instead? "First of all, I'm not buff enough," he said through an interpreter at the world championships in Indianapolis over the summer. "I got pushed away from the basket. And even when I didn't, I couldn't get anyone to throw me a pass." ¶ Which raises another question (besides What is Mandarin for *buff*?)—shouldn't your Shanghai Sharks teammates have simply lobbed you

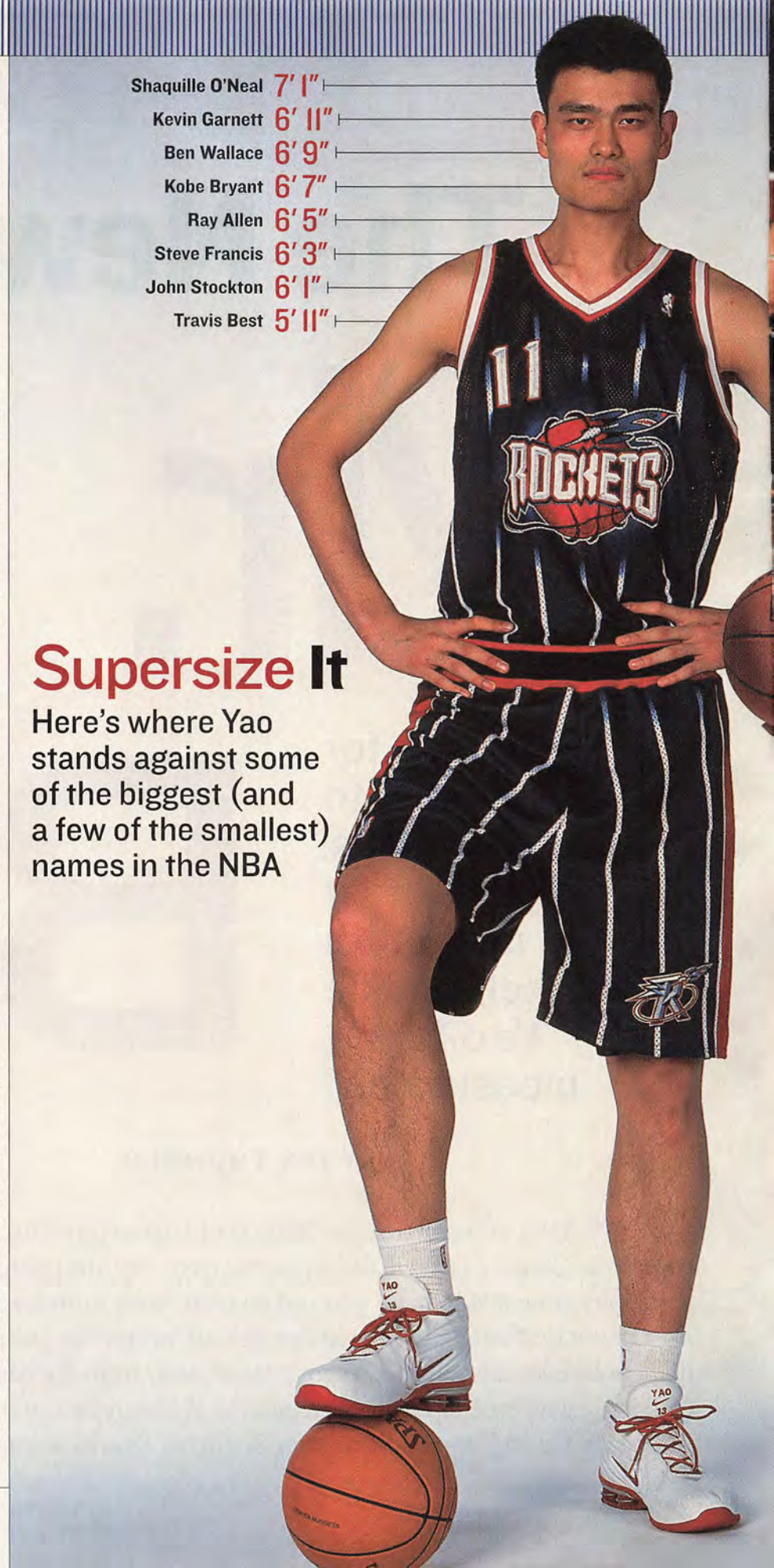
PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN W. McDONOUGH

the ball? Yao smiled. "*You* know that," he answered in his basso profundo."But somebody doesn't know."

Frustrated by coaches and teammates who didn't have the first idea about how to exploit his size, skill and agility, the 22-year-old Yao is eager to join the Houston Rockets, and the NBA is even more eager to have him. The ranks of the league's big men are undergoing sweeping changes. Most of the centers who spent the last decade ruling the paint—Hakeem Olajuwon, David Robinson, Patrick Ewing, Alonzo Mourning—have retired or are on their way out, taking with them the sort of strength and guile that have long defined the position. Their towering, glowering dominance as heirs to Mikan and Russell and Chamberlain and Abdul-Jabbar and Malone is embodied by only one man among the 29 teams of today. LCL is what 7' 1", 345-pound Shaquille O'Neal has taken to calling himself: Last Center Left.

It's not that 7-footers have stopped arriving in the NBA; it's just that they seldom act like traditional pivots when they do. Kevin Garnett of the Minnesota Timberwolves (by way of Farragut Academy in Chicago), Dirk Nowitzki of the Dallas Mavericks (by way of the Würzburg X-Rays) and Pau Gasol of the Memphis Grizzlies (by way of FC Barcelona), for instance, have made unconventional entrances and indelible impressions. Fans who can't imagine walking a mile in Shaq's size 22s see in this new wave something closer to an Everyman Big Man, who creates his own shots off the dribble, fires three-pointers in transition and feels *less* comfortable with his back to the basket than facing it.

Now comes Yao, the No. 1 pick in the June draft, on whom the old expectations fit as well as off-the-rack clothing. He takes more pride in his fluid stroke from the free throw line than in his dunks. In Indianapolis, where China finished 12th, he was voted to the all-tournament team (an honor that eluded the members of the sixth-place U.S.) for flicking in threes, bouncing behind-the-back passes to backdoor cutters and swatting away the shots of Elton Brand and Paul Pierce. Yao follows Robinson and Tim Duncan of the San Antonio Spurs in the lithe, Russell tradition, but those two were low-post players who gradually moved outside. Like a football coach who sets up the run with the pass, Yao developed his perimeter



Supersize It

Here's where Yao stands against some of the biggest (and a few of the smallest) names in the NBA

game first. To complement his height—in the NBA, only the Mavericks' 7' 6" Shawn Bradley is taller—Yao has the thick rear and oak-trunk thighs that will help him establish position alongside Shaq when he's ready to assert himself in the low post.

Yao arrives just in time to exploit several emerging trends in the NBA. Now that big men can be double-teamed before receiving the ball, it is harder to feed the ones who do most of their scoring in the low post. Another incentive to move outside is the three-point line, and Yao has learned to take advantage of that—he looked comfortable swishing threes last May during his public workout for NBA teams in Chicago. "In the old days when you received two points for any kind of basket, sure, you'd rather have your big man trying to score from two feet than to have someone else shooting from 17," says Boston Celtics coach Jim O'Brien. "But that's changed now that you get that third point. That's why you see Nowitzki and Garnett out there."

Yao is fortunate to be playing in Houston, where coach Rudy Tomjanovich and general manager Carroll Dawson were serving as assistant coaches when the modern movement toward versatile big men was launched with the arrival of center Ralph Sampson, the No. 1 pick by the Rockets in 1983. When Houston added Olajuwon the following season, Sampson became a 7' 4" power forward who was ahead of his time: He averaged 20.7 points and 10.9 rebounds over his first three seasons, or close to Garnett's production (22.0 and 11.8) with the Timberwolves over the last three years. Rather than being celebrated for his perimeter skills, a la Garnett, Sampson was perceived as a fainthearted anomaly unwilling to muscle his way into the paint.

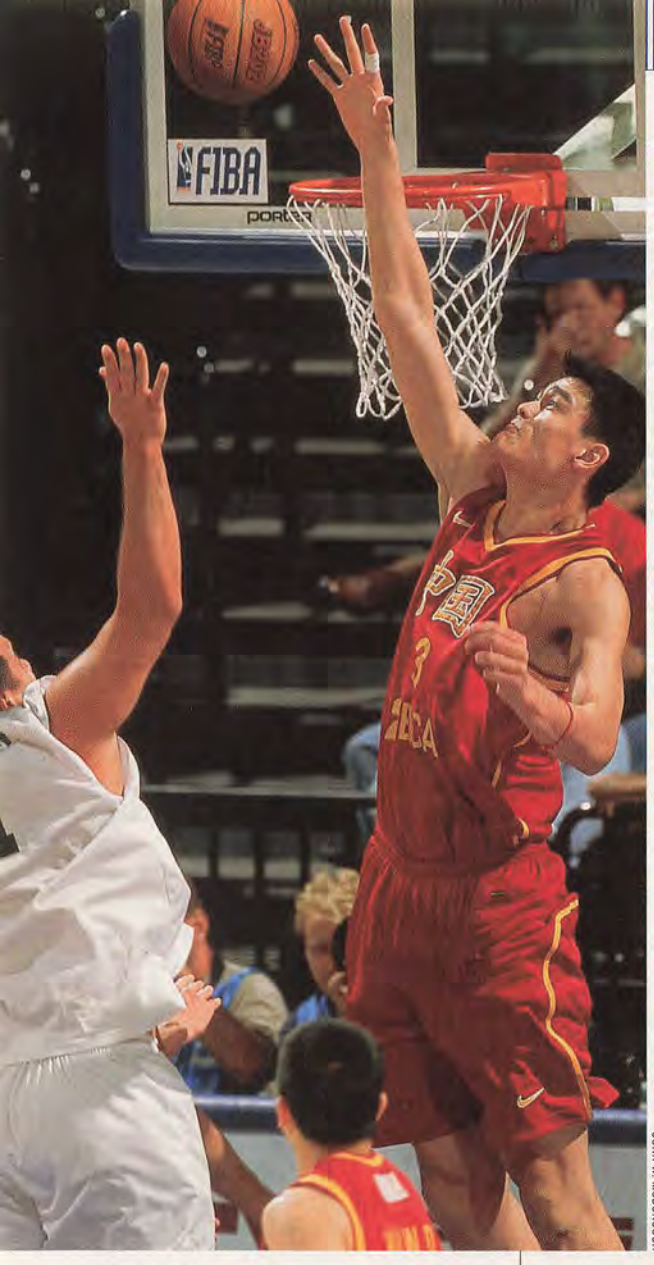
The complaints about Sampson today seem to be relics of a less enlightened era. "Think about all you'd lose if you put Garnett down in the block and made him stay there," Dawson says. "Of course, if you could talk [T-Wolves coach] Flip Saunders into doing it, I'd like that."

While Sampson spent four high-profile seasons at Virginia before coming to Houston, Yao enters the league as an unknown quantity, surrounded by more misconceptions than any previous top pick. For starters, some NBA executives believed he would balk at suiting up for the Rockets because they weren't on his list of favored teams (the New York Knicks, the Chicago Bulls, the Lakers and the Golden State Warriors). Yao's agent, Bill Duffy, who was unofficially providing advice to Yao before the draft, admits that he drew up that list to let small-market franchises like the Grizzlies, the Cleveland Cavaliers and the Denver Nuggets know that Yao wouldn't want to go there. In reality, says Duffy, the hype and buzz that followed Yao throughout his workout in Chicago persuaded him that he didn't want to play in a major media center. With the less frenetic lifestyle of Houston, Tomjanovich's championship experience and the prospect of building a contender around Steve Francis and Yao—point guard and center being the two most difficult positions to fill—Houston proved ideal.

Another misunderstanding concerned Yao's attitude. Perhaps grasping at straws, some NBA team executives speculated that because he had not indicated that he would defect, he wasn't strong-minded, and that would be reflected on the floor. Instead, he used his recent tour of North America to exhibit not only toughness but a healthy nastiness as well. During China's 94–66 exhibition loss to Canada, on Aug. 16 in Vancouver, he broke the wrist of 6' 8" forward Andrew Kwiatkowski during a rebounding skirmish. Then, with a wave of his long fingers, he dared 6' 7" guard Prosper Karangwa to attack the basket during a two-on-one break—whereupon Yao hip-

Yao hip-checked the Canadian a good 10 feet, bruising his ribs. Make no mistake, he is not a gentle giant.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW D. BERNSTEIN/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES (YAO) AND NATHANIEL S. BUTLER/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES



JOHN W. MCDONOUGH

>> CONVINCED? At the worlds in Indianapolis, Yao showed off his agility.

checked Karangwa a good 10 feet, bruising the Canadian's ribs so badly that he required a flak jacket throughout the worlds. Make no mistake, Yao is not a gentle giant.

Then there was the lingering sense—resulting largely from Yao's workout in Chicago, where he demonstrated a subpar vertical leap and showed a relatively undeveloped upper body—that he is an unathletic plodder along the lines of former 7' 4" Indiana Pacers center Rik Smits. At this point Yao may not be spectacular, but he is clearly athletic: He stays under control and plays close to the floor, yet he gets where he needs to be to score, rebound and stifle shooters. Those with doubts about Yao were more enthusiastic after watching him in Indianapolis, where he combined agility with a shooting touch and highly developed basketball instincts. "Yao wasn't born with those basketball skills," one scout said. "He had to earn them with hours and hours of practice. If he loves the game as much as it looks like he does, then he should be much better than Smits."

Eventually Yao is going to learn to play on the blocks. But until then he won't settle in the post as much as he will dart inside, take a quick pass and score before the double team can arrive. Tomjanovich says Yao can already throw a good fake and then stands up to mimic him, moving one way, then changing direction to move to the open spot. If Magic Johnson had an advantage in seeing the court as a 6' 9" point guard, imagine how it will be for Yao as a 7' 5" passer from the foul line. Dawson remembers watching Yao beat a double team at the worlds by snapping a long assist to the far corner. "Usually it takes a team two passes to swing the ball because most people can't see over there," says Dawson, who was seated next to Tomjanovich. "Rudy said, 'Did you see that?' and I said, 'Why do you think I hit you?' "

How did Yao develop so sophisticated a game in China, more than 7,000 miles and 13 time zones away from his new NBA home? It didn't hurt that he was the only child of a 6' 3" mother and a 6' 7" father, both former national team players. At the age of 12, Yao was sent to a basketball school at the provincial sports academy in Shanghai, where he trained several hours daily without, apparently, losing his passion for the game. At the academy he lived in a studio dorm room with a king-sized bed and a private bath; his only form of transportation was an undersized bike. Yao has spent the last eight years studying the footwork of Olajuwon, whose games were televised in China during the Rockets' championship seasons of 1994–95 and '95–96. He also admired the Portland Trail Blazers' savvy Lithuanian center, 7' 3", 292-pound Arvydas Sabonis, a superb passer and excellent outside shooter.

The absence of talented home-grown big men will only make Yao's skills seem more precious. As the U.S. dragged its tail through the worlds, Antonio Maceiras, the G.M. of FC Barcelona, criticized the American big men for being proficient in only one or two aspects of the game. He argued that the U.S. would have been better off recruiting Americans from the pro leagues in Europe, where expats have learned to shoot, pass, rebound and defend. "Rashard Griffith [of Kinder Bologna] and Nate Huffman [a former Maccabi–Tel Aviv star who signed with the Toronto Raptors] are better international centers than any of the centers the U.S. has in this tournament," said Maceiras.

No doubt, Yao won't be ready to take on Shaq for some time. (The teams' first meeting is Nov. 17, in L.A.) After training year-round for China and not joining the Rockets until Monday, Yao is bound to experience periods of exhaustion during his rookie year. At a minimum, however, he should give Houston a shot blocker as well as a high-post presence who can score and pass. Yao has rarely played with the world's elite players. The best guess here is that he will spend the next couple of years learning from the league's diversified big men, then spend the rest of his career taking them to school. □

"Yao wasn't born with those basketball skills," says one scout. "He had to earn them with hours of practice."

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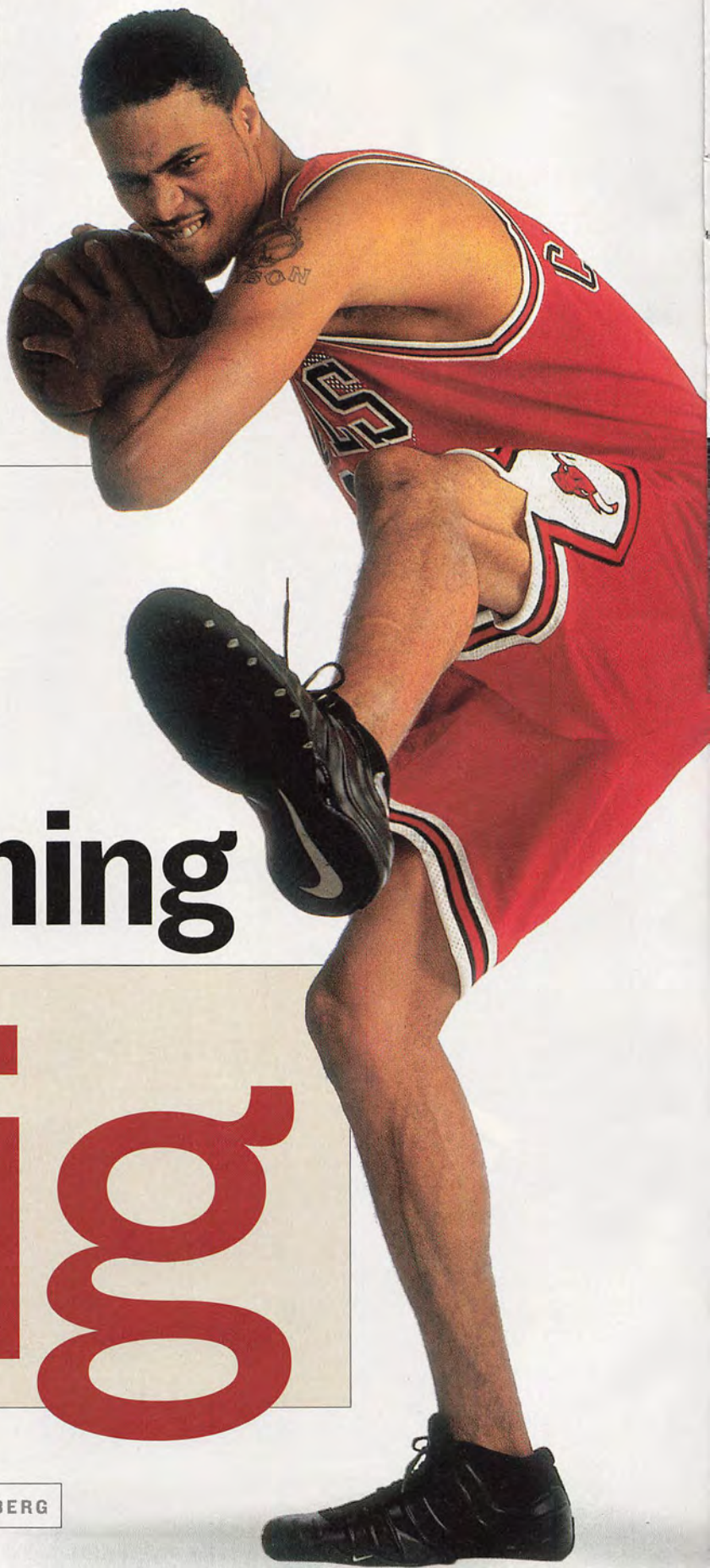
Staking the future on two raw 7-footers—**TYSON CHANDLER** and **EDDY CURRY**—the Bulls hope the growing pains are brief and the payoff is huge

The Start Of Something Big



BY CHRIS BALLARD

PHOTOGRAPH BY TODD ROSENBERG

>> KILLER LOOKS
They're no matched pair: Californian Chandler (left) is excitable while Midwesterner Curry is mellow.

FOR TYSON CHANDLER and Eddy Curry, the Chicago Bulls' pair of underage 7-footers, NBA life offers educational opportunities every day. Last month, for instance, Chandler learned about the potential benefits of a home security system when, a little after 3 a.m., he was awakened by a strange noise downstairs in his North Shore apartment. "First thing I do is grab my pool stick in one hand and an iron in the other," he says, mimicking the stance he assumed with these unlikely weapons—a pose that made him look like a freakishly tall conquistador.

Chandler crept down the stairs cue-first. But instead of confronting the intruder—or a malfunctioning kitchen appliance—he made a break for the back door. Once outside, he did what any sensible person would do: He drove to the nearest hotel and checked in.

"And you never even called the cops?" asks strength and conditioning coach Erik Helland, who has been listening as Chandler tells the story at the team's practice facility, the Berto Center, in Deerfield, Ill.

"Uh, no," says Chandler, who still doesn't know what made the noise.

"What about your alarm?"

"I haven't figured out how to use it yet."

Helland walks away shaking his head. By now, though, after a season with Chandler, 20, and Curry, 19, he should be accustomed to such stories. Earlier in the summer it was Curry who was stopped outside the Berto Center by a policeman, who told him that his new all-terrain vehicle wasn't legal for city driving and that he'd have to get it off the street. Instead of pushing it a few blocks away to his condo, Curry left the truck in the Berto parking lot. "That was two months ago," says Helland. "It's still out there."

Ah, raising children. "Sometimes we forget that these are kids, and they're going to make the mistakes that kids make," says Chicago coach Bill Cartwright. He pauses and looks at his young charges, who are trying to do wheelies on their stationary bikes, then continues, "Our job is to make sure they aren't making the same mistakes five years from now."

If they are, it won't be because the Bulls didn't try. Ever since general manager Jerry Krause picked Chandler and Curry second and fourth, respectively, in the first round of the 2001 NBA draft—the first time a team selected two high school players in the same year—he has molded the team around them and assembled a crack squad of coaches, mentors and former NBA centers to instruct the duo on and off the court. Last February the Bulls acquired All-Star guard Jalen Rose to relieve the scoring pressure on Chandler and Curry; in June, Chicago drafted point guard Jay Williams of Duke to get them the ball. "They've done everything possible for us," says Chandler. "We can never look back in 10 years and say it's the team's fault if things don't work out. It's entirely on us."

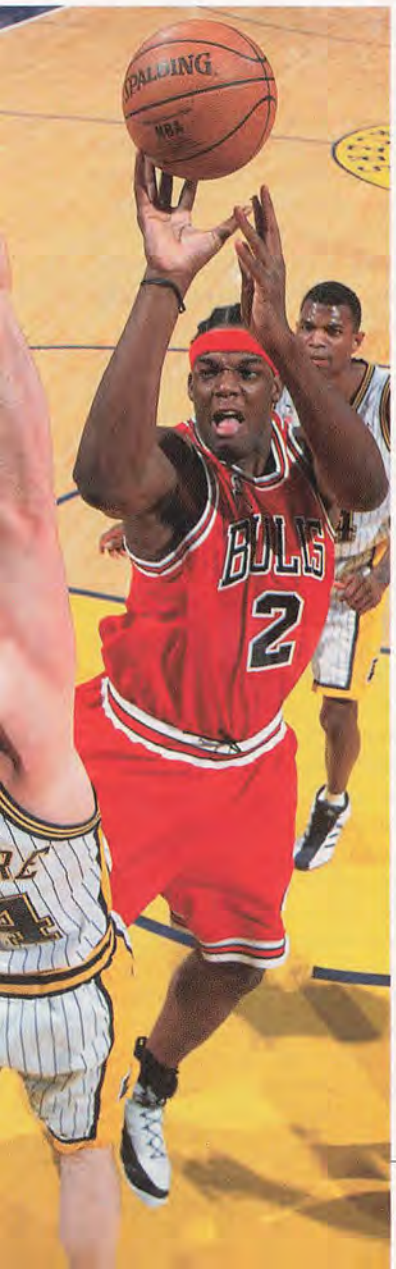
There is a lot riding on those undeveloped shoulders. Mired in four seasons of post-Jordan malaise, Chicago (21–61 in 2001–02, last place in the Central Division) has asked fans to wait for the dawn of a new era of success—even if there is no timetable for it. Sure, teams have been built around players who arrived in the NBA straight from high school (most notably the Minnesota Timberwolves with Kevin Garnett) but never has one franchise bet so much on a pair of teenagers, let alone two big men, traditionally the slowest developers in the NBA.

The challenge facing the Bulls, then, is this: How hard can they

push Chandler and Curry without risking their investment—either by burying them on the bench (see Jermaine O'Neal in Portland) or by asking too much too soon and perhaps crippling their confidence (see Kwame Brown in Washington)? "There's no road map for this, and we know that," says Krause. "We're trying stuff, and if it doesn't work, we'll step back and reevaluate." He pauses. "Basically, we're winging it."

Class began in the summer of 2001, at the first Bulls scrimmage. The boy kings arrived full of themselves. Chandler, at 7 feet and 220 pounds (he has since grown an inch and a half), had been dominant at Dominguez High in Compton, Calif. Curry, a Mack truck of a young man at 6' 11" and 285 pounds (he has since added an inch), had been the nation's most sought-after recruit, a bruising inside force for Thornwood High in suburban Chicago. Against NBA veterans, they soon found, those credentials were as worthless as an MIT degree at an arm-wrestling match. Says Curry, who still watches tapes of those practices for motivation, "Even the guys who had looked slow on TV were fast."

The duo appeared similarly lost in summer-league play and not much better in the first few months of the season. Chandler had his moments on defense, where his pterodactyl-like wingspan and launchpad hops allowed him to make up for his poor footwork. But he was helpless on offense, so worried about the plays that he recalls feeling "like a robot out there." Curry was the opposite—comfortable with the ball in his hands, displaying a nice array of post moves, but dead weight on defense, always one rotation behind and two steps too slow. As a result, practices often resembled Biddy Ball clinics. "We started with junior high drills, man-you-ball stuff, and went from there," says the 7' 1" Cartwright, a Bulls assistant before replacing Tim Floyd as coach last December, another move Krause made with Curry and Chandler in mind.

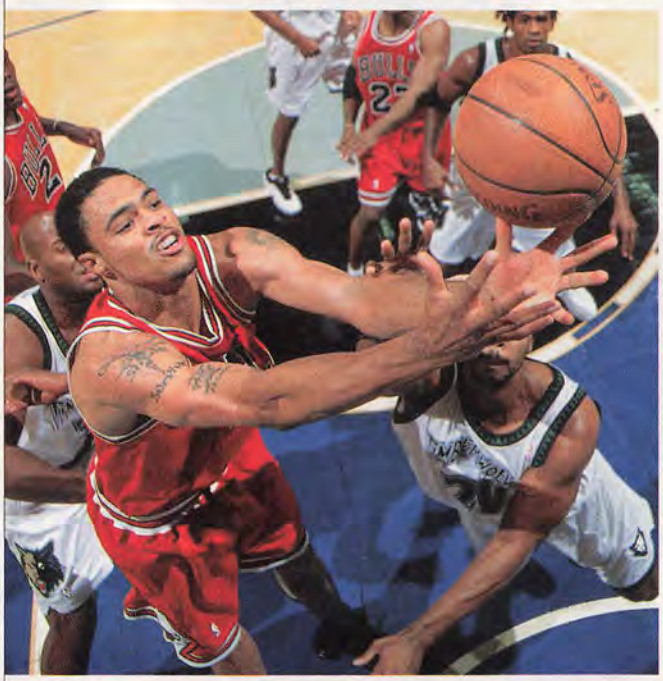


>> POST MODERN Curry has a soft touch and a young Shaq's body, but his D needs work.

Krause had expected to treat the new kids as a pair and even meet with them regularly as a twosome. However, after discovering how different their personalities are, he soon jettisoned that idea and started seeing them separately. Chandler is gregarious, emotional and kinetic, though prone to getting down on himself. Curry is mellow, quiet, the well-mannered child of a matriarchal family. "Tyson's very intelligent and mature, so we talked about team stuff and different players," says Krause. "With Eddy I talked about growth and maturity, the mental aspect of the game." Krause gave each a copy of Bill Russell's latest book, *Russell Rules*. The message was clear: The psychological part of the game is just as important as the physical part.

Even so, one can't play in the NBA without a body that can withstand the NBA grind, and the players' conditioning was another area of concern. (In his 19.6 minutes per game, Chandler averaged 6.1 points and 4.8 rebounds; Curry, in 16.0 minutes, racked up 6.7 points and 3.8 boards.) Despite their natural athleticism—Chandler is one of the fastest players on the team, while Curry is a former gymnast—both tended to burn out during relatively short bursts of playing time.

>> HANDIWORK Chandler's hops and hustle enable him not only to be assertive underneath but also to maneuver on the wing.



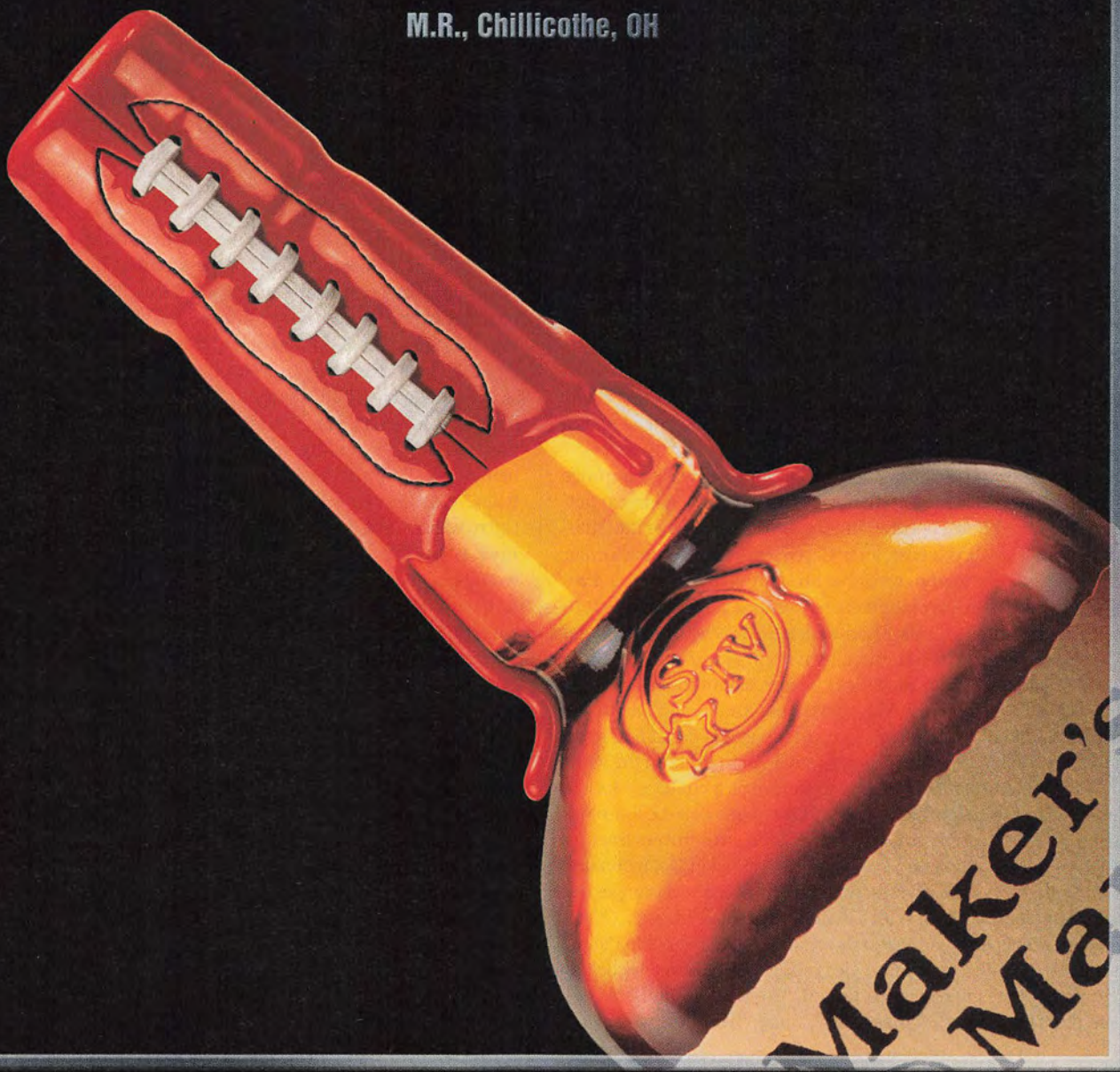
The Bulls have two 7-foot kids who can be molded to their designs—or vice versa.

So last summer Chandler and Curry spent their mornings at the Berto Center, lifting weights under Helland's supervision. As a result, Chandler gained 10 pounds of muscle that is noticeable, if not yet tight-black-T-shirt-worthy. "I've been working out for two years," he says, squeezing his arms in a mock Schwarzeneggerian pose, "and I still don't have a chest muscle in my body!" Regardless, a year ago he didn't know how to do a squat lift; now he can put up 240 pounds. "Ideally, I'd like to see him get his weight up [20 more pounds] to 250," says Hel-

JOHN BIEVER (FAR LEFT); DAVID E. KLUTHO

"IT'S JUST NOT FOOTBALL WITHOUT SOMETHING TO PASS AROUND."

M.R., Chillicothe, OH



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Thanks for the story, M.R. If anyone else out there has a Maker's story they'd like to share, please visit www.makersmark.com.

Looming Large

Here's a shortlist of young giants—in addition to baby Bulls Curry and Chandler—who look poised to have breakout seasons.—C.B.

Player	Age	Team	Hgt.	Wgt.	NBA season
Brendan Haywood	23	Wizards	7 feet	268	Second

Proved himself an able shot blocker and rebounder as a rookie but hit the wall in February, then had surgery to repair loose cartilage in his right knee. Spent the summer lifting weights. With added scoring threats in Washington's lineup he'll get easier buckets—and with Popeye Jones gone, he'll get more minutes.

Jerome James	26	SuperSonics	7′ 1″	285	Third

Immense yet athletic; dunked on an 11′4″ rim while playing for the Harlem Globetrotters. Excellent shot blocker (4.48 rejections per game as a senior at Florida A&M) but undeveloped offensively. Prone to foul trouble and putting on pounds: His new three-year, $15 million contract includes a weight clause.

Rasho Nesterovic	26	Timberwolves	7 feet	250	Fifth

Slovenian began to come into his own in 2001–02, playing all 82 games and averaging 8.4 points and 6.5 rebounds. Has nice touch around the basket, effective hook shot. Confidence and consistency remain his biggest needs. Improvement could yield a huge payoff: Unrestricted free agency beckons next summer.

Zach Randolph	21	Trail Blazers	6′9″	253	Second

Destroyed the competition in the Rocky Mountain Revue summer league for second year in a row. Only averaged 6.0 minutes last season but led the league in offensive rebounds per 48 minutes (13.9). Will struggle for playing time in crowded Portland frontcourt but has NBA body, hands and instincts.

Jake Tsakalidis	23	Suns	7′2″	285	Third

Rap used to be that his defense was good but his offense was deplorable: tentative, bad hands, couldn't finish. After Stephon Marbury showed faith by using him in high pick-and-rolls late last season, Big Jake began racking up double doubles, cashing in on easier looks and taking it to the hole with more authority.

land, who compares Chandler's narrow hips and skinny frame with that of a young David Robinson. "Right now we're working on creating a strong lower base."

Curry, on the other hand, has plenty of base. Blessed with big joints and a heavy hip structure (the only comparison Helland can think of is an LSU-era Shaquille O'Neal), Curry spent the off-season turning fat into muscle. He is a leaner, more defined 295 pounds and has even hired the Bulls' training chef, Steve Jackson, to cook his meals. "I tell him what I want, and he makes it healthy," says Curry. "I say fried fish, he bakes it."

On the hardwood Chicago's aim last summer was to improve the players' consistency. To that end Krause hired eight-year veteran pivotman Bob Thornton in July. Thornton became the Bulls' third Professor of the Post, after Cartwright and another former center, Bill Wennington, who was brought in a year ago as a coordinator of player development—essentially a guidance counselor for the oversized kids. Thornton's focus was teaching three go-to moves: a spin to the middle, a turnaround jumper, and a jump hook or baby hook. For each move he also taught them a counter, an option if the shot is overplayed. Because Krause and Cartwright envision Chandler as a power forward capable of defending small forwards, Chandler was also put through guard drills on the wing.

Chandler's versatility is a luxury as well as a challenge for the Bulls. On many teams he would be forced to play on the low block simply because of his size. Traditionally in twin towers lineups, such as the San Antonio Spurs' teaming of David Robinson and Tim Duncan, an established player has been joined by a younger one who complements him. With Chandler and Curry, though, Chicago has two players who are so raw that they can be molded to the team's designs—or, in this case, vice versa. Krause did it once before, but with a lone guard named Jordan. "We built around Michael, and that was unheard of then," says Krause. "This time we saw the opportunity to get two exceptional 7-footers and bring them in at the same time. We wanted two kids who could grow up together."

Working in Chicago's favor is the fact that both players are gym rats. Three or four nights a week during the summer Curry returned to the Berto Center after a morning workout to play full-court with his high school buddies, using an access code to enter the gym. Then, if he'd wake up in the wee hours, unable to sleep, he'd go back and shoot 100 free throws. Chandler likewise haunted the practice facility, often watching tape with the assistant coaches or dropping in on Krause to talk strategy. "Not just being nosy, I'd watch tape with him, talk about the future of the team," Chandler says. He'd return at around 11:30 p.m., just as Curry was leaving, with two childhood friends, Keith Brooks and Rock Perry. The trio, who call themselves the Workout Bandits, would play ball, swim, sit in the Jacuzzi and watch tape. "It was fun, but Eddy and I did it for a reason," says Chandler. "Last year we didn't expect to make a difference. This year we do."

Cartwright will give them every opportunity. Provided they can stay in shape and out of foul trouble, each could see 30 minutes or more of playing time every game. Curry should be the team's primary post-up option—the role the team sees him in for the next decade—and Chandler its best defensive player. Asked about this meshing of talents, Curry smiles and looks over at Chandler. "I guess some people are skilled offensively, some defensively," he says. "But together we got defense and offense."

Tyson nods. "Com-bi-na-tion, baby."

"Yup," says Curry. "We a combination."

"Like shrimp fried rice."

"Like peanut butter and jelly."

"Give me the number four combo plate!"

And on they go, gleefully rattling off analogies, the future of the Bulls still rooted squarely in the present. □

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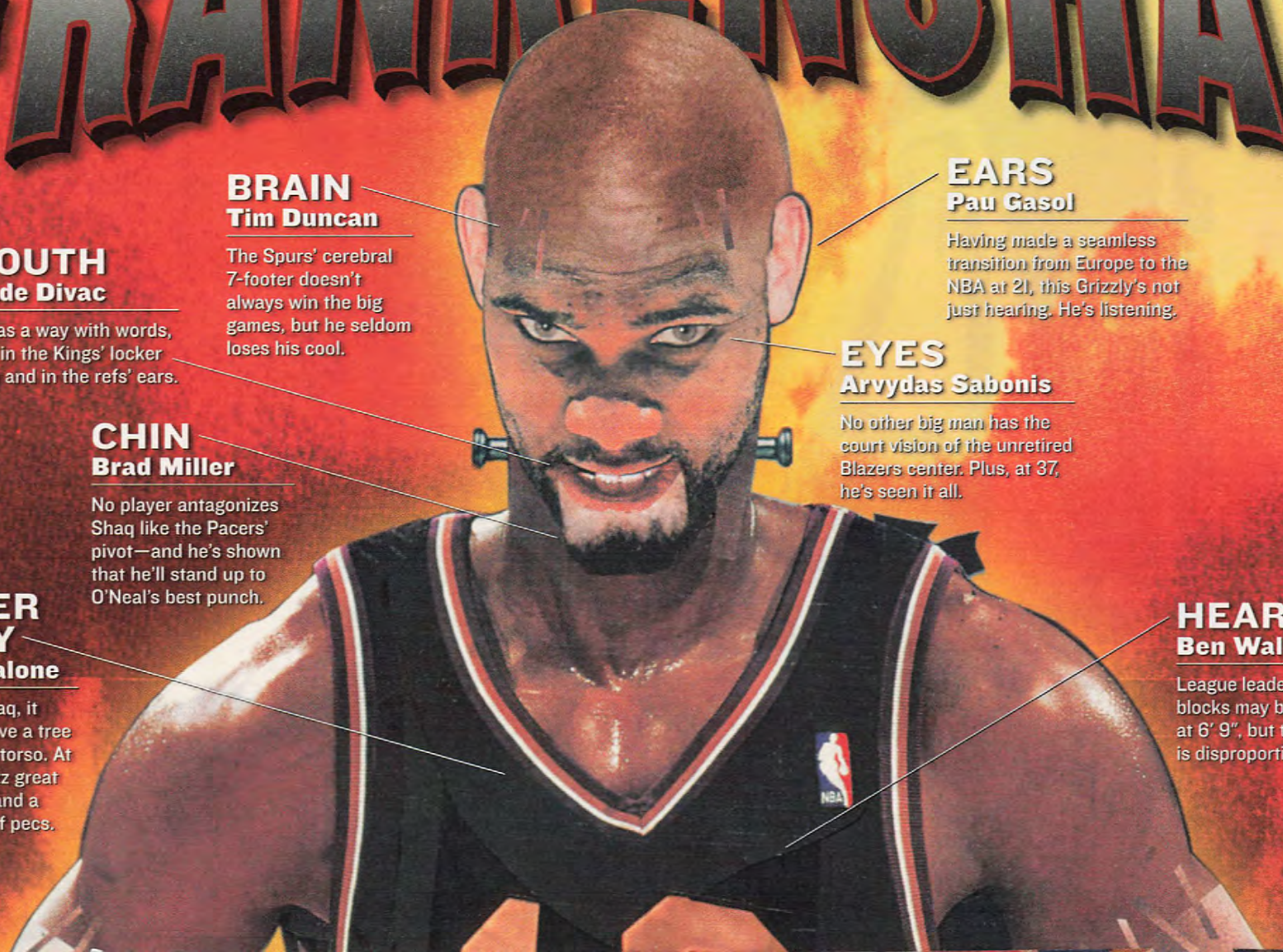

BRAIN
Tim Duncan

The Spurs' cerebral 7-footer doesn't always win the big games, but he seldom loses his cool.

EARS
Pau Gasol

Having made a seamless transition from Europe to the NBA at 21, this Grizzly's not just hearing. He's listening.

MOUTH
Vlade Divac

He has a way with words, both in the Kings' locker room and in the refs' ears.

EYES
Arvydas Sabonis

No other big man has the court vision of the unretired Blazers center. Plus, at 37, he's seen it all.

CHIN
Brad Miller

No player antagonizes Shaq like the Pacers' pivot—and he's shown that he'll stand up to O'Neal's best punch.

UPPER BODY
Karl Malone

To slow Shaq, it helps to have a tree trunk for a torso. At 39, the Jazz great has that—and a bushelful of pecs.

HEART
Ben Wallace

League leader in boards and blocks may be undersized at 6' 9", but this Piston's pride is disproportionately large.

ELBOWS
Dikembe Mutombo

Trick of the trade: The Nets' center "accidentally" throws 'bows that seem to have been whetted between quarters.

RIGHT ARM
Dirk Nowitzki

The best way to counteract Shaq in the paint? Lure him out of it, which this Mav's smooth righty stroke will surely do.

RIGHT HAND
Todd MacCulloch

Big Mac may be league's best-passing big man. Sixer also catches everything, a skill honed snatching Jason Kidd's hot potatoes.

RIGHT LEG
Kevin Garnett

KG can rack up the FGs. Explosive T-Wolves forward blows by Shaq with a turbo-powered first step.

RIGHT FOOT
Rasheed Wallace

Deft inside moves by Blazers forward can turn Shaq's feet into pretzels.

LEFT ARM
Raef LaFrentz

The only thing better than a shot blocker is a southpaw shot blocker. (Dallas forward's lefty jumper doesn't hurt either.)

BUTT
Yao Ming

How do you say "baby got back" in Mandarin? Rockets rookie has a superior posterior—and it'll only grow.

LEFT HAND
Chris Webber

Though it's not his preferred mitt, Kings forward uses it well to grab rebounds and launch all manner of shots around the basket.

LEFT LEG
Elton Brand

Once the other post man in L.A. plants his leg, getting him out of that position requires heavy machinery.

LEFT FOOT
Antonio Davis

Raptors' versatile frontcourt man is as nimble and fleet as any center in the league.

BY L. JON WERTHEIM

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY EDMUND GUY

JOHN W. MCDONOUGH /BRAIN/; ROBERT MORA/GETTY IMAGES /SCALP/; JOE MURPHY/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES /EARS/; SAM FORENCICH /EYES/; JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES /MOUTH/; ROCKY WIDNER/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES /CHIN/; ELIOT J. SCHECTER/GETTY IMAGES /UPPER BODY/; NATHANIEL S. BUTLER/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES /RIGHT ARM, LEFT LEG/; TIM DEFRISCO/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES /LEFT ARM/; NOREN TROTMAN/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES /RIGHT HAND/; BARRY GOSSAGE/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES /LEFT HAND/; STEVE SIPKOLA/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES /RIGHT FOOT/; RON TURENNE/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES /LEFT FOOT/; WALTER IOOSS JR. /O'NEAL/

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The Big Show

He's a solid center and a team leader, but it's in his role as the Kings' body-flopping, lip-flapping court thespian that Vlade Divac really stars

BY JACK McCALLUM

PHOTOGRAPH BY PETER READ MILLER

ANA DIVAC needed some first-class promotion for *Lysistrata—The Sex Strike*, the play she was codirecting at the Stages Theatre Center in Hollywood in September and October, so she solicited help from the celebrated 7' 1" thespian with whom she lives. Which explains why her husband, Vlade, dressed as an Athenian soldier, can be seen on tape at the beginning of the play declaring that he will demand sex from his wife when he returns from battle. "In real life," the 34-year-old Divac says with a smile, "it does not happen like that."

Ah, but how to separate the real from the theatrical in the life of Vlade Divac, actor and humanitarian, funny guy and Sacramento Kings pivotman? When he treads the NBA boards, an operatic ambience—at times comic, at times tragic—surrounds this gentle, bearded soul.

Vlade does bemused very well: Disagreeing with a referee's call, he rolls his eyes and forgivingly pats the mistaken official on the back. Vlade does flabbergasted very well: Offended by a ref's egregiously erroneous decision, he bangs both hands against his cranium. Vlade does stricken very well: Finding a whistle astonishingly unjust and subversive to the world order, he exhibits his displeasure with outstretched arms and an imploring look to the heavens, followed by an animated monologue to set the ref straight.

Vlade's flair for the dramatic is most evident when contact is involved. Upon being shouldered aside by an opposing center—say, a 340-pound behemoth clad in purple and gold—he will lurch backward as if propelled by the thrust of a jet engine and either land in a heap at the baseline or somehow, visibly shaken, remain vertical, a stalwart soldier determined not to leave his post no matter how barbarous the assault. Vlade the Impaler he is not.

While Divac concedes that he has a tendency to overdramatize, he sees himself as merely a helpful lieutenant in the crusade to eliminate chaos on the court. "I do not act because I'm trying to steal something from somebody," says Divac, wearing a straight face. "I do it because I'm trying to call attention to something. Officiating is the hardest thing in sports, but a lot of times referees don't blow the whistle because they have . . . let's call it respect, yes, too much respect for a certain team or player."

The attention bestowed upon Divac the Thespian detracts, as he well knows, from Divac the Player. In fact, he's always been typecast in a way that overshadows his skills in the paint. After being drafted by the Lakers in 1989, he was cast as the Funny Yugoslav, joking around with Magic Johnson, charming La-La Land with his quick wit and gregarious nature. Upon being traded from L.A. to the Charlotte Hornets in '96, he became the Locker Room Ambassador, the media's go-to guy, the arbitrator of team battles, the calming influence. After he came to the Kings as a free agent during the strike-shortened '98–99 season, he evolved into the Elder Statesman, both a guide for young teammates and an anguished patriot who gave time and money to his war-torn homeland, where his parents, who are Serbian, still live in the house where Vlade was born.

He also volunteered for a role that comes naturally to him—that of Designated Chirper. As reliably as anyone in the league (with the possible exception of Shaquille O'Neal), Divac sprinkles verbal gasoline on any fire, however small. He delivered many variations on the we're-not-scared-of-the-Lakers theme during last season's playoffs, and, predictably, came through with a U.S.-can-be-beaten declaration before the world championships this summer in Indianapolis. Sometimes Divac's pronouncements are ad-libbed, but he is just as likely to have rehearsed his lines. "I say things to make my life exciting once in a while," he says. "Why not? Shaq does the same thing." Divac is the classic example of the guy hated by opponents and adored by teammates.

It's easy to forget that Divac has been a pretty good player for 13 seasons, with career averages of 12.3 points and 8.6 rebounds. His game is well-rounded and consistent—classical in a sense. It's not the key ingredient for the Kings; Mike Bibby's quarterbacking, Chris Webber's inside-and-outside effectiveness and the combined offensive firepower of Peja Stojakovic and Hedo Turkoglu are more important. But Divac is always there, a perennial, a slow starter but a finisher, a warrior. His play at the world championships mirrored his play in the NBA: In Yugoslavia's early games

<<SCENE-STEALER
A ref's blown call is sure to prompt the standard histrionics from Divac: disbelief mixed with an appeal to the heavens.

he looked like a tired old man, but on he came, getting stronger as his team did. In the end he and Stojakovic spent an unforgettable September day in the center square of Belgrade, celebrating Yugoslavia's world title with 100,000 elated countrymen.

As the NBA season begins, Divac finds himself in a role that's really not much of a stretch: Vlade the Giant Slayer. With the San Antonio Spurs' David Robinson playing out the string and the Miami Heat's Alonzo Mourning limited by kidney disease, Divac is, at his advanced age, the game's most prominent foil to O'Neal *(box, page 88)*. "With Shaq's size, strength and athletic ability, he's like a guy 10 years ahead of his time," Divac says. "Me? I'm like a guy from 10 years ago."

CHUCKLING AS he ambles along with his head down, Divac almost walks into a post in the bowels of American Airlines Center. He has just stepped off the bus for the Kings' 2002 preseason opener, on Oct. 8. "Hey, Geoff!" he yells to Kings general manager Geoff Petrie. "You see this?" Divac shows him a program for that night's game, which lists Divac's birth year as 1998 instead of 1968. "You must give me a lifetime contract. Look how many good years I have left. I am only four years old." He slaps Petrie on the back and enters the locker room, leaving Petrie shaking his head.

>> SUPPORTING ACTOR
Divac's many roles on and off the court have included (this page, from left): Ana's groom, in '89; Magic's teammate, in '91; and Serbian patriot, in '99.

Inside the locker room Divac immediately strips. "A pregame shower," he says, grabbing a towel, "is the only way I can wake up. Besides, I am the cleanest player on the floor that way. When I was younger, I used to go out early, warm up, check out the crowd, let them check out me."

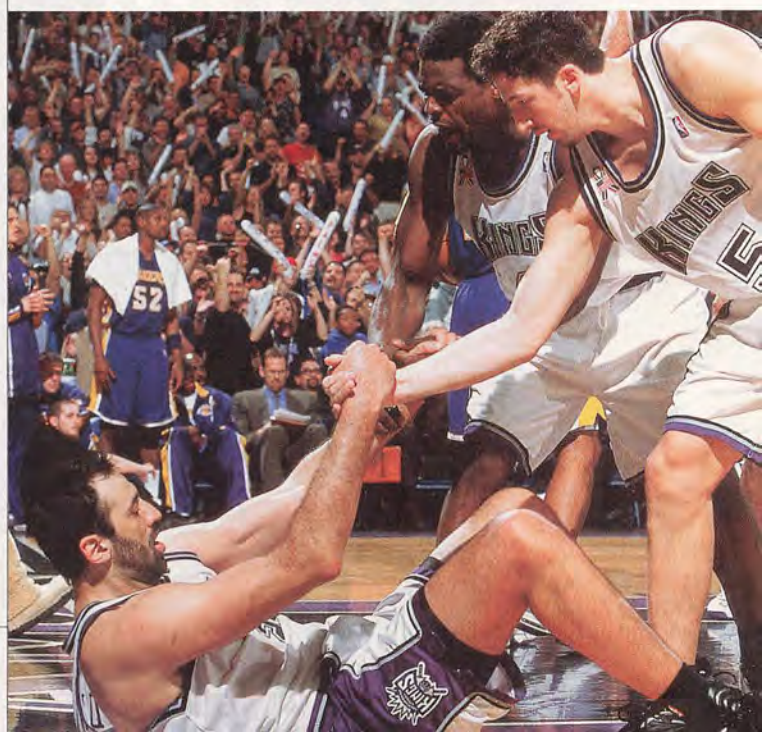
Divac returns from his shower, towels off, sits down and looks around the locker room. This is his domain. This is where he is at his best. Like his father, Divac is a schmoozer. Milenko Divac is a popular man in Prijepolje, the city in western Serbia where Vlade was born. Before Milenko retired, he managed a small electronics factory, but what he liked most was walking around town, meeting friends for coffee, catching up on the news of the day. "Many Yugoslavian men are quiet, distrustful of people and not very open," says Ana Divac. "Vlade is the opposite. Exactly like his father."

Divac pulls on his jersey, smooths it down and points to the lettering, which now spells out SACRAMENTO instead of KINGS, as it did in the past. "They are trying to send a message with these new uniforms," Divac says. "They are encouraging us to build up our chests. Right now it looks like I play for MENTO."

Keon Clark, a beanpole obtained from the Toronto Raptors in the off-season to back up Divac, emerges from the bathroom with his bald pate covered in shaving cream. Divac almost falls on the floor laughing. "A camera!" he shouts. "Where is a camera when you need it?" Clark breaks into a wide grin. He and Divac have become close; just as important, so have Clark and last year's backup center, Scot Pollard, from whom Clark will be taking playing time. This easygoing oddball trio deserves a nickname, so let's try this one: the Sacramento Stooges.

Clark has become Divac's favorite patsy for his ever-growing inventory of card tricks, a subject on which Divac and Webber are discoursing at the moment. Divac, like most of the Kings, loved the trade that sent the unpredictable Jason Williams to the Memphis Grizzlies for Bibby, but it cost Divac a magic-obsessed friend. Divac's best trick, says Webber, is making a cigarette disappear. "I learned it from a home-

FROM LEFT: DJOROVIC/GRAZIA NERI; PETER READ MILLER; VINCE BUCCI/AFP



less guy in Los Angeles," says Divac. "I stopped the car one night to give him $30, and he says, 'Wait a minute. I'll show you something.' " The trick is perfect for Divac because he enjoys his reputation as an occasional smoker. "It's not like I sneak into a secret place in the locker room and puff like a madman," he says. He admits to smoking the odd cigarette, even during the season, and to puffing on cigars. "Obviously, smoking doesn't help me," he says, "but I don't think it hurts at this point either."

The talk turns to Tunel 21, the Italian restaurant that Divac and his wife will soon open in Sacramento. Divac is most excited about the downstairs nightclub, which he hopes will become *the* spot for Sacramento's postgame scene. "I expect all these guys to show up," he says, sweeping his arm around the room. "So my clientele will be, you know, freeloaders."

Championship teams usually have a looseness and confidence about them, and the Kings have that part down already. Divac, the veteran leader, and Webber, the superstar who's down with his teammates, are the major reasons. "The first thing I noticed here," says Clark, "is that there are no egos. That's very unusual."

Tip-off is nearing, and a reporter asks Divac what he expects from the exhibition season. "No, no, it is not exhibition," says Divac, feigning a serious tone. "David Stern wants us to call it preseason. *Exhibition* sounds too . . . unofficial." He smiles slyly. "I am a company man."

THE WAITERS at Il Fornaio, an Italian restaurant in downtown Sacramento, greet Divac like an old friend when he enters. He sits down, and a young woman approaches him for an autograph. "I admire the way you play," she says. When she leaves, Divac smiles. "See?" he says. "She admires it even if Shaq does not."

The general manager who most admired Divac's play as a young member of the Yugoslav national team was the Lakers' Jerry West, ahead of the curve as usual on NBA matters. West made Divac the 26th pick of the 1989 NBA draft, and Divac says it was one of the greatest strokes of luck he ever had. "None of the other European players had an organization that understood family," he says. "Magic, Byron [Scott], A.C. [Green]. Whatever I was dealing with, they were behind me. I'm not sure I could've made it without those guys." Divac still speaks of West with reverence. "Here was this guy who was on the NBA logo saying he wanted me and, after I got there, always acting like he wanted me. Jerry does not talk much, so when he says something, it's . . . heavy. That's the only word for Jerry West. He is very heavy."

As reliably as anyone in the league (except perhaps Shaq), Divac sprinkles verbal gasoline on any fire, however small.

Came the day, of course, that Mr. Heavy traded Divac to Charlotte, a deal that not only gave the Lakers the draft rights to Kobe Bryant but also cleared cap space for the eventual free-agent signing of O'Neal. Divac was so devastated after the July '96 deal that he almost quit the game. "It was the first bad thing that had ever happened to me," says Divac. "But, later, when I thought about it, what else could Jerry have done? *Let's see, I can get Kobe and Shaq and give up only Vlade.* Who wouldn't do that?"

Hornets coach Dave Cowens persuaded him to give it a try, and Divac spent two productive seasons in Charlotte, enhancing his status among NBA centers. When Petrie signed Divac as a free agent in January '99, he was looking not only for a locker room presence but also for a real player, a court-savvy hub for the Kings' offense—which is exactly what Divac has been.

Still, as well as he has played, it is Divac's leadership and his qualities as a human being that the Kings dwell upon. "I've never met a better person than Vlade," says coach Rick Adelman. "When you have a guy on your team who will talk to a ball boy the same way he'll talk to the President of the U.S., that is special."

>> D AS IN DRAMA Divac is well-versed in the art of crashing backward to the floor, flailing painfully after contact and playing coy with the authorities.

FROM LEFT: ROBERT BECK; JOHN W. MCDONOUGH (2)

How I Attack SHAQ

THOUGH IT would be too strong to call Vlade Divac a Shaq-stopper, he did slow down Shaquille O'Neal in the memorable 2002 Western Conference finals. Here Divac imparts his strategy when he goes up against the NBA's irresistible force. "I have to approach it like Bill Russell approached playing Wilt Chamberlain. I have to try to outsmart Shaq, because I will never beat him physically."

FIRST, meet him early, out on top of the foul circle. If you let him walk you down into the paint, he is impossible to handle. A few years ago, if he stopped outside, you were way ahead of the game, because he didn't have much of a shot. Now he has a little turnaround jumper and a hook with some range. But, obviously, those are the shots you still want him to take. He makes half of them, maybe more, but he makes all of his dunks.

SECOND, try to make him tired. Run whenever you can. Approach it like a boxing match that's going 15 rounds. Running is not really my game, but I make it my game against Shaq. And when [Kings backup center] Scot Pollard comes in, he has to run.

THIRD, dart around a lot. Appear on one side of him one time, the other side the next time. Don't let him be comfortable. He has no fear, but he can have doubt—doubt about where you are. He tries to avoid offensive fouls, so you can get him thinking about that.

FOURTH, make the ref call the game. Flopping? I don't call it flopping. I call it letting the ref know there is contact. If you can get Shaq thinking about you instead of thinking about the game, you've done something positive. He was frustrated at times in the playoffs, and for the first time he started talking to me. Things like, "Stop flopping, bitch." I tell him, "Just keep playing, Shaq." I don't know if he respects me, but I honestly do not care. The only respect I need on the court is respect from my teammates and from my coaches. If I play Shaq tough, I guarantee you I will have that respect.

JOHN W. MCDONOUGH

"Vlade makes everybody on this team into good guys," says Pollard, who refers to Divac, Stojakovic and Turkoglu as the Father, the Son and the Holy Turk.

It is impossible to have more than a 10-minute conversation with Divac and not hear the word *family*. He would not still be playing, he says, if the Kings had not gradually built themselves into a close-knit bunch like the one he found in his early days in L.A. And he would not be playing well, he says, if he and Ana had not decided that she would scale back her theater career to live with him and their children (Luka, Matia and Petra) in Sacramento during the season. During the Thursday-through-Sunday run of *Lysistrata—The Sex Strike*, which wrapped up on Oct. 12, Ana would fly to L.A. on Thursday morning, stay in their house in Pacific Palisades and fly back to Sacramento on Monday morning. Vlade talks proudly of his parents' recent 40th wedding anniversary and says he and Ana will have one of those too. Vlade, in fact, can be a bit overbearing on the subject of marriage—as he is when his close friend and business associate Vuja Jovic, who is divorced, stops by for lunch.

"You see, Vuja here, he and his wife did not try," says Divac, staring down his friend.

"We tried," says Jovic, who works for Divac's agent.

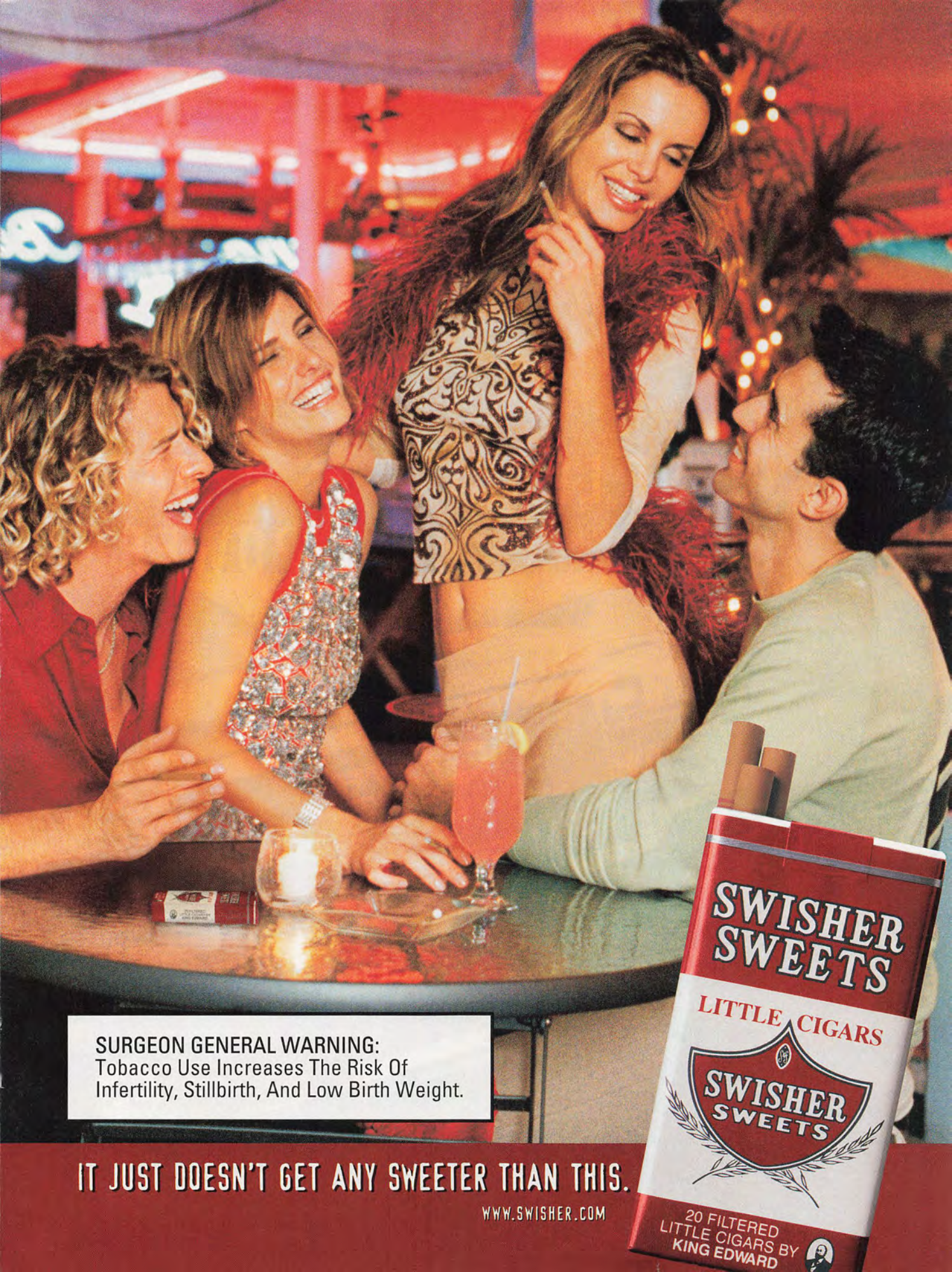
"You did not try!" snaps Divac. "If you tried, you would still be together. When you are married, you cannot go your own way."

Obviously the Balkan cataclysm of the 1990s, in which Serbs were pitted against Croats and Bosnian Muslims, profoundly affected a man who takes family so seriously. During the spring of '99, as NATO bombed Yugoslavia, Divac stayed up far into the night, following the news on TV and the Internet. His relationships with his former national teammates, particularly the Croatian Toni Kukoc, have been affected. "We are still friends," Divac says softly. "We can still talk. But it will never be the same. Too much has happened."

Divac was so moved by the bloodshed that he formed Group 7/Vlade Divac Children's Foundation, an organization dedicated to providing medical supplies, food and other relief to Balkan children victimized by war and civil unrest. During one relief trip to Yugoslavia, he and Ana adopted Petra, then six months old, who had lost her parents in the fighting. Vlade was an outspoken critic of former Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic. The player's tirades frequently appeared on the front pages of Yugoslav newspapers because in his homeland, he says, "I am a heavy guy, like Jerry West." Jovic worried for his friend's safety, so harsh were Divac's criticisms of Milosevic, who was later arrested and is now on trial for war crimes. Divac is also active in UNICEF; last year he made a $10,000 donation to its Afghanistan Relief Project.

Given his fame, his love of his homeland, his knack for leadership and his ability as a public speaker, Divac is frequently asked if he will get involved in Yugoslav politics when his basketball career is over (which could be after the '03–04 season, when his six-year, $62.5 million contract is up). He doesn't rule it out, but he says it's unlikely. To the extent that he involves himself in politics, he is a single-issue man: He is antiwar. He voted for George Bush in the last election only because a Democrat was in power when NATO bombs fell on Yugoslavia. He says he won't vote for Bush again only because the President is calling for war against Iraq.

In all likelihood he will continue to involve himself in humanitarian activities, working both in his adopted States and his homeland to improve conditions for children. "Right now I am thinking only of this season and how we can win a championship for Sacramento," says Divac. "It will not be easy, because there is one team in front of us, and one very large man in front of me." □



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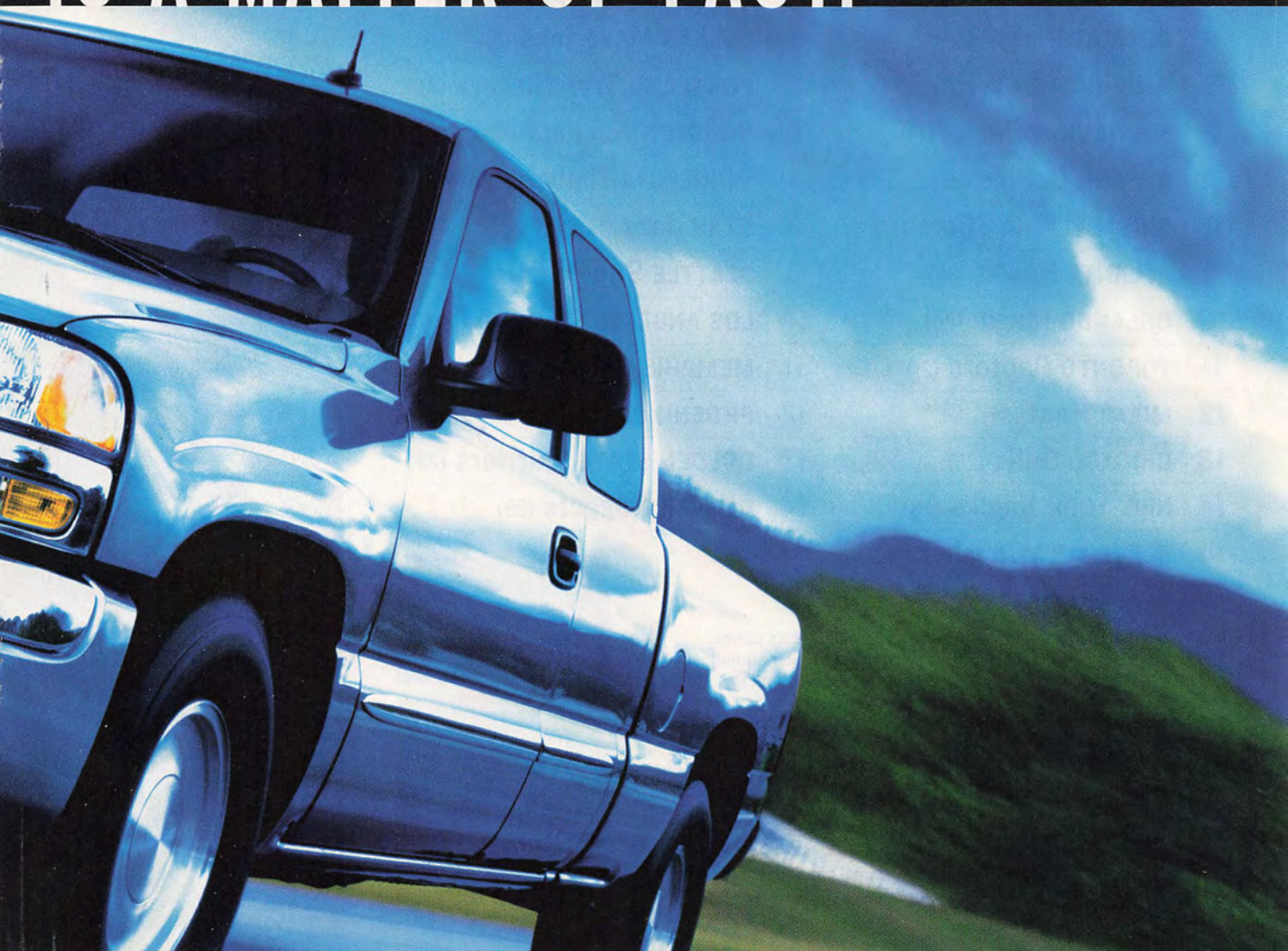


Scouting Reports

HOW WE RANK THEM

EASTERN CONFERENCE	
1	NEW JERSEY Nets (4)*
2	NEW ORLEANS Hornets (6)
3	INDIANA Pacers (8)
4	DETROIT Pistons (9)
5	WASHINGTON Wizards (11)
6	MILWAUKEE Bucks (14)
7	BOSTON Celtics (16)
8	PHILADELPHIA 76ers (17)
9	ATLANTA Hawks (19)
10	ORLANDO Magic (20)
11	TORONTO Raptors (21)
12	MIAMI Heat (24)
13	CHICAGO Bulls (25)
14	NEW YORK Knicks (26)
15	CLEVELAND Cavaliers (27)

WESTERN CONFERENCE	
1	SACRAMENTO Kings (1)
2	LOS ANGELES Lakers (2)
3	SAN ANTONIO Spurs (3)
4	DALLAS Mavericks (5)
5	PORTLAND Trail Blazers (7)
6	HOUSTON Rockets (10)
7	MINNESOTA Timberwolves (12)
8	UTAH Jazz (13)
9	SEATTLE SuperSonics (15)
10	LOS ANGELES Clippers (18)
11	MEMPHIS Grizzlies (22)
12	PHOENIX Suns (23)
13	GOLDEN STATE Warriors (28)
14	DENVER Nuggets (29)

*League ranking, 1 to 29

PLAYER VALUE RANKINGS (PVR): We ranked the NBA's players from 1 (the best) to 348 based on our projections of their statistical production this season. The categories considered were points, rebounds, assists, steals, blocked shots, field goal percentage, free throws made and three-pointers made. We also took into account each player's career stats as well as his role on the team, his prospects for improving or declining, his injury history and his physical condition. Using these criteria, we determined each player's PVR, which appears next to his name in his team's projected lineup.

For NBA team pages, stats and rosters, plus news and analysis from Jack McCallum and Marty Burns, go to **cnnsi.com/basketball.** *For a complete list of PVRs by position, go to* **cnnsi.com/fantasy.**

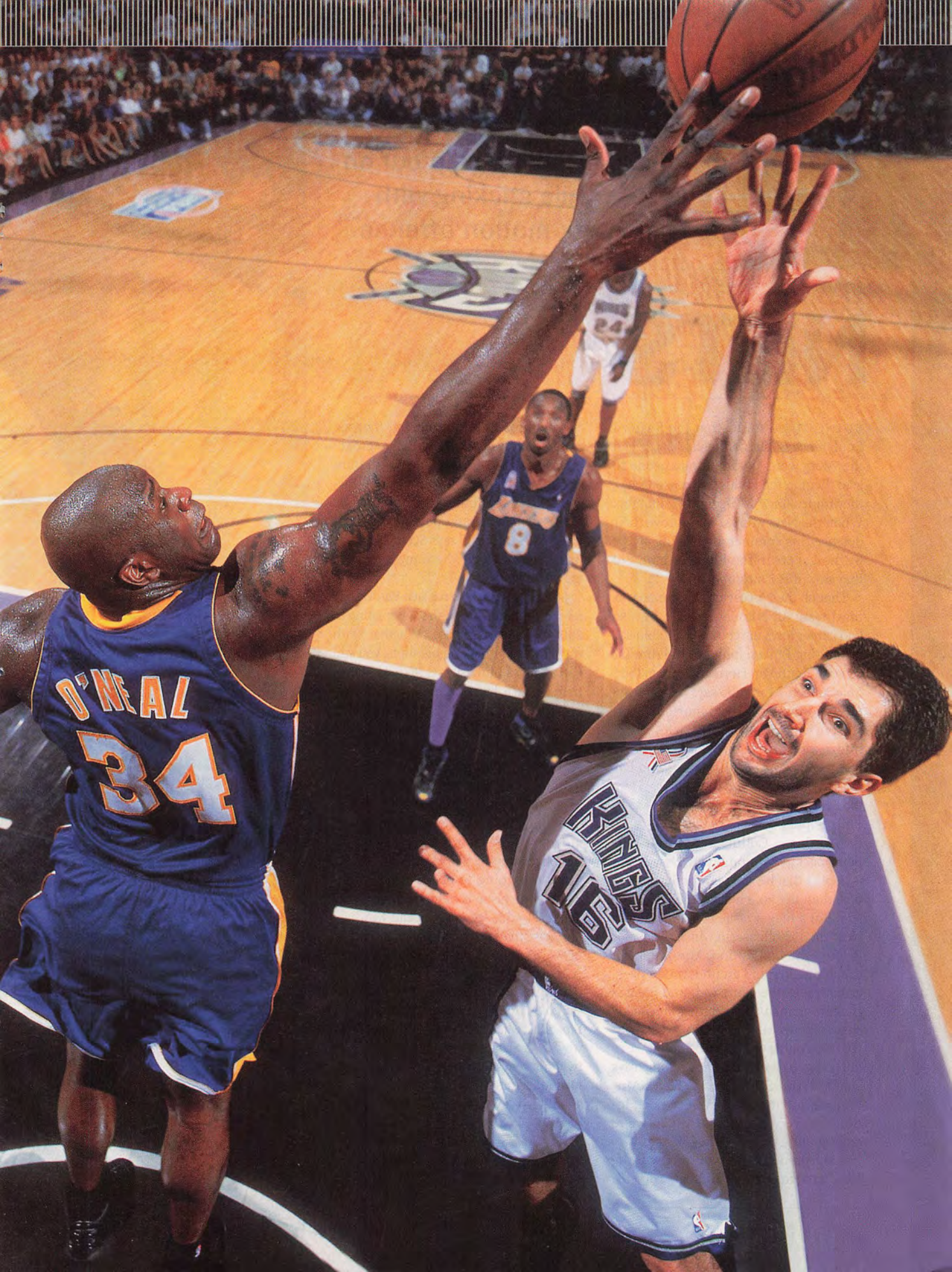
EASTERN CONFERENCE FINALS
Nets OVER **Hornets**

WESTERN CONFERENCE FINALS
Kings OVER **Lakers**

NBA FINALS
Kings OVER **Nets**

>> LAST YEAR Shaq thwarted Peja Stojakovic and the Kings in Game 7 of the Western Conference finals. Now it's Sacramento's turn to beat L.A.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN W. McDONOUGH


O'NEAL
34
8
KINGS
16

1

After being swept in the Finals last season, the team brings in a familiar face to help out on defense—while sticking with its trademark motion offense

NEW JERSEY NETS

YOU COULD argue that the Eastern Conference is short of fresh ideas. When the 76ers were looking for someone to lead them to the Finals two seasons ago, they traded for 7' 2" Dikembe Mutombo. When the Nets wanted to improve their defense this summer after being swept by the Lakers in the Finals, whom did they acquire? Mutombo.

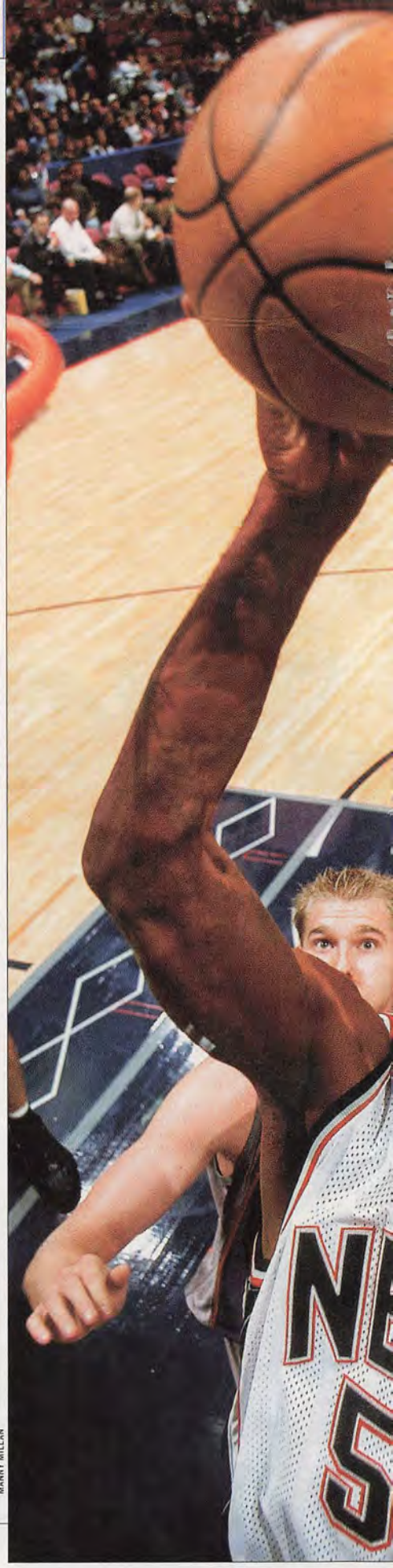
Though the 36-year-old Mutombo was third-team All-NBA last season, he also had career lows in rebounds and blocks, prompting Philadelphia to deal him for forward Keith Van Horn and center Todd MacCulloch. Mutombo says he had been fatigued by the Sixers' shortened offseason, which also resulted in a spate of injuries on the team. "I am going to bounce back," says Mutombo, who has missed only 30 games in 11 years. "Here the bench is much stronger than it was in Philadelphia."

With Jason Collins and Aaron Williams backing Mutombo up, New Jersey is hoping that he will play far fewer minutes than the 36.3 he averaged last season. But a bigger issue is his role in the Nets' motion offense, in which the center is often the first option. Mutombo is a capable scorer and an underrated passer who sees the court well and creates room to maneuver with his notoriously sharp elbows. His one glaring weakness: He has trouble catching the ball. "We're not going to change a thing for him," says coach Byron Scott, who believes Mutombo's offensive skills have been ignored in recent years. "In fact, we're adding more pieces to the offense."

Scott predicts that not only will the Nets' system of reads and cuts run efficiently through Mutombo, but that the center's shot blocking will also create more easy baskets for Jason Kidd in transition. As the new starter at small forward, Richard Jefferson should force more turnovers and open up the floor, too. "With Richard," says Scott, "we have five guys who have the same defensive mentality."

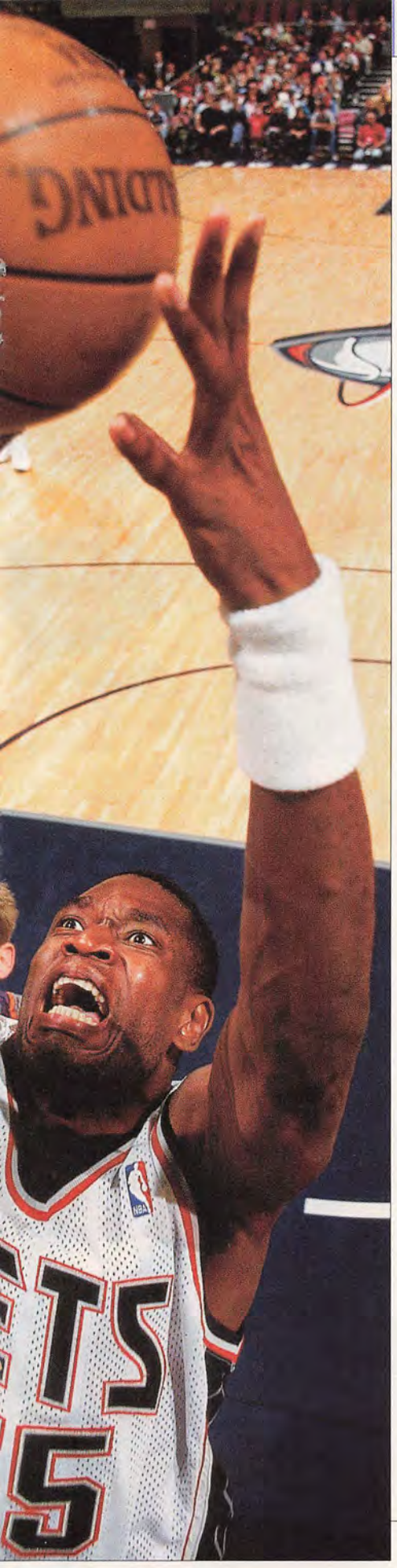
Jefferson must also replace Van Horn's rebounding (a team-high 7.5 per game in 2001–02) and his offense. "Whether Keith was missing or making his shots, you still had to guard him," says G.M. Rod Thorn. In nine starts last year the 6' 7" Jefferson averaged 15.2 points—.4 more than Van Horn's mark for the season. Despite playing just 24.3 minutes per game, he was also second on the team in free throw attempts. Jefferson spent the first month of summer vacation improving his ball handling and shooting with the idea of moving to off-guard, a plan that was scrubbed after the Van Horn trade. "Scoring is not going to be an issue," vows Kidd. "The issue is defense. If you play defense in this league, you can win."

Rather than take a low-key approach—or worry about Kidd's being in the last year of his contract—Scott wants the Nets to act like perennial contenders and has set goals of 60 wins and a return to the Finals. "We have targets on our backs anyway," says Scott. "We want to be in the top two this year in defense. It's worked well for the Lakers the last three years, and it should work well for us." —*Ian Thomsen*



BOTH SIDES NOW The Nets hope that Mutombo, acquired primarily for his defense, will add to the offense, too.

MANNY MILLAN



FAST FACT The Nets became the first team since the 1977–78 Sonics to reach the Finals after failing to make the playoffs the previous year.

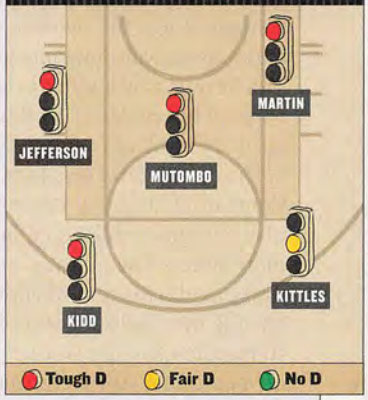
ENEMY LINES an opposing team's scout sizes up the Nets

"At first I didn't like the trade for **Dikembe Mutombo**, but I'm starting to come around. Apparently the Nets felt they really needed to get rid of Keith Van Horn. He had too many nights of 1 for 10.... **Richard Jefferson** will be able to replace his scoring. Jefferson is not the threat Van Horn was, but you still can't afford to leave him alone. Plus, **Kenyon Martin**'s improved a lot as a scorer, and **Rodney Rogers** will be coming off the bench.... Trust me: They're not going to be able to run their Princeton offense through Mutombo. They'll give him some touches, I'm sure, but anything more isn't going to work, because if he

NEW JERSEY'S ADDED DEPTH WILL ALLOW THE STARTERS TO PLAY DEFENSE AT A HIGHER LEVEL.

catches the ball, it takes him a half hour just to move it up to his chin and back down again. Still, they should be able to keep running their offense for the other guys.... Rogers looked heavy in preseason, but he's always had problems with his weight, and I don't think they're going to ask him to be very active. All they need is for him to play physical defense off the bench and spot up for jump shots. With him, **Jason Collins** and **Aaron Williams**, New Jersey should be able to limit Mutombo to fewer than 30 minutes a game and keep him fresh. We'll see if Mutombo accepts that.... I'm a **Kenyon Martin** convert. He has to keep improving that jump shot, but he's a better shot blocker and rebounder and a far more aggressive finisher than I thought he'd be.... The Nets are dramatically improved at point guard with **Chris Childs** as their backup. He's highly competitive and knows how to run a team. Their added depth will allow the starters to play defense at a higher level, knowing they'll get rest.... Assistant coach **Eddie Jordan** does a lot with their offense, but **Byron Scott** obviously makes the final decisions, and he earned a lot of respect for his work in the last playoffs. Of course, **Jason Kidd** is more important than either of them."

DEFENSIVE RATINGS



PROJECTED LINEUP

2001–02 record: 52–30 (first in Atlantic)
Points scored: 96.2 (13th) Points allowed: 92.0 (5th)
Coach: Byron Scott (third season with Nets)

STARTERS	PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
SF Richard Jefferson	91	9.4 ppg	3.7 rpg	1.8 apg	0.81 spg	45.7 FG%
PF Kenyon Martin	31	14.9 ppg	5.3 rpg	1.66 bpg	1.23 spg	46.3 FG%
C Dikembe Mutombo	46	11.5 ppg	10.8 rpg	1.0 apg	2.38 bpg	50.1 FG%
SG Kerry Kittles	69	13.4 ppg	3.4 rpg	2.6 apg	1.59 spg	46.6 FG%
PG Jason Kidd	16	14.7 ppg	7.3 rpg	9.9 apg	2.13 spg	39.1 FG%
BENCH	**PVR***	**2001–02 KEY STATS**				
F Rodney Rogers	96	11.9 ppg	4.5 rpg	0.86 spg	47.1 FG%	37.4 3FG%
G Lucious Harris	189	9.1 ppg	2.8 rpg	1.6 apg	46.4 FG%	37.3 3FG%
F-C Aaron Williams	224	7.2 ppg	4.1 rpg	0.9 apg	0.93 bpg	52.6 FG%
C Jason Collins	254	4.5 ppg	3.9 rpg	1.1 apg	0.61 bpg	42.1 FG%
G Chris Childs	275	4.1 ppg	2.2 rpg	5.1 apg	0.81 spg	32.8 FG%

New acquisition (R) Rookie (statistics for final college season) *PVR: Player Value Ranking (explanation on page 92)

2

The new fans are revved-up, the top scorer is healthy, and the supporting cast is battle-tested. Any reason this transplanted team shouldn't be a contender?

NEW ORLEANS HORNETS

EVEN THE slightest motion would send forward Jamal Mashburn's world dipping and twirling. One drizzly day early in the summer it was the swish of windshield wipers as his wife drove him to the doctor. "You're used to being able to look past the wipers, but I couldn't," Mashburn says. "I got dizzy right away. It was awful."

His energy level wasn't much better. Constantly fatigued, he was unable to play with his toddler son, Jamal Jr., for more than a few minutes at a time. At first one doctor told Mashburn it was anemia that had sent him off the court 10 minutes into the Hornets' first playoff game last April, lightheaded and vomiting, unable to return for the rest of the postseason. They started him on a daily regimen of shots, told him he might have to continue taking them for the rest of his life. At the urging of his mother, Helen, Mashburn sought a second opinion. Eventually he found a neurologist who was able to diagnose his illness correctly. Positional vertigo, he was told, caused by a stomach virus. The only cure is rest.

The spinning didn't stop until the end of June. "When I woke up one day and I wasn't dizzy, that was the happiest I'd been," says Mashburn, 29, the team's leading scorer last season. "You're always checking yourself, you're always asking, Is that it? And then one day you're fine."

Able to work out again, the 6' 8" Mashburn did exercises to strengthen muscles around the lower abdominal strain that kept him out for 42 games at the start of last season. Though a sprained left knee sidelined him during the preseason, his abs are stronger, and he can once again get low into a crouch, a necessity for gaining position in the post. "His power base looks better," says point guard Baron Davis, who called Mashburn twice a week in the summer to check up on him. Coach Paul Silas agrees. "You can even see it on his jump shot," says Silas. "He's squaring up better."

A healthy Mashburn is not only good news for Silas but also bad news for the rest of the East. Though losing Mashburn certainly hurt the Hornets in the playoffs, the silver (or teal) lining was that, in reaching the conference semifinals, the team learned to win without him. Fourth-year man Davis emerged as an opportunistic scorer and true floor leader, one capable of carrying a team; he averaged 22.6 points in the playoffs, 4.5 more than his output in the regular season. (Though in his subsequent World Basketball Championship performance he was more erratic.) What's more, after playing to the league's smallest home crowds in 2001–02 (average attendance at the Charlotte Coliseum: 11,286), this year the Hornets figure to have a true home court advantage at the New Orleans Arena (seating capacity: 18,500). Says Silas, "Barring injuries, we think we have a good shot at winning the East."

Considering his veteran squad—six key players have at least nine years' experience—and how well the Hornets played last year in Mashburn's absence, it's hard to disagree. —*Chris Ballard*

STEADY AND READY A bout of vertigo laid Mashburn low during the playoffs, but he returned to camp fitter than ever.

NATHANIEL S. BUTLER/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES

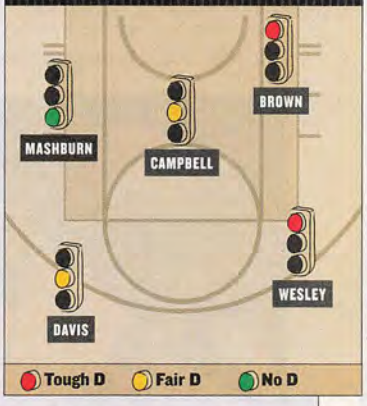
FAST FACT Of the 127 players who made at least 125 free throws last season, Baron Davis (58.0%) shot better than only Shaquille O'Neal (55.0%).

ENEMY LINES an opposing team's scout sizes up the Hornets

"This is one of those rare teams that can be effective inside and outside, and it has a decent bench.... I'm not a big fan of **Elden Campbell** because he doesn't play with emotion, and you don't know what you're going to get. Nonetheless, he's one of the top five centers in the Eastern Conference and, this being the last year of his contract, you can expect his best effort. Plus he's going to get pushed by **Jamaal Magloire**, who's trying to prove that he's worthy of taking over for Campbell next season. Magloire scores a lot off putbacks, and he's good if he has room to spin, but he has trouble if you drop guards down and pressure him.... They should be a toughened bunch after last year, when they didn't have **Jamal Mashburn** most of the time, they didn't know if the team was moving and they had no home court advantage in Charlotte. They reacted positively by going 23–18 on the road.... I don't believe their small backcourt is a problem, because **David Wesley** is such a tough defender at the two. Sure a 6' 5" guy might shoot over him, but that guy's going to work his ass off to get that shot because Wesley's strong and he'll fight through every screen.... If he accepts the role, **Courtney Alexander** could be a help as the third guard.... The only big question I have concerns **Baron Davis**, who is showing signs of letting his new contract go to his head. I was disappointed in him this summer at the world championships, in which he tried to dominate from the point guard position. I'm sure he was trying to ensure that they didn't lose, but in fact he was ensuring that they would. He has to be more unselfish and stay with the high-percentage passes instead of going for the spectacular play. If Davis does those things, then the Hornets are in great shape, because he's the kind of guy who can hit the big shot when it presents itself."

THE ONLY BIG QUESTION IS DAVIS, WHO MAY BE LETTING HIS NEW CONTRACT GO TO HIS HEAD.

DEFENSIVE RATINGS



PROJECTED LINEUP

2001–02 record: 44–38 (second in Central)
Points scored: 93.9 (20th) Points allowed: 92.9 (7th)
Coach: Paul Silas (fifth season with Hornets)

STARTERS		PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
SF	Jamal Mashburn	49	21.5 ppg	6.1 rpg	4.3 apg	1.13 spg	40.7 FG%
PF	P.J. Brown	100	8.4 ppg	9.8 rpg	1.3 apg	0.98 bpg	47.4 FG%
C	Elden Campbell	65	13.9 ppg	6.9 rpg	1.3 apg	1.78 bpg	48.4 FG%
SG	David Wesley	110	14.2 ppg	3.5 apg	1.10 spg	40.0 FG%	33.2 3FG%
PG	Baron Davis	27	18.1 ppg	4.3 rpg	8.5 apg	2.10 spg	41.7 FG%

BENCH		PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
C	Jamaal Magloire	134	8.5 ppg	5.6 rpg	1.05 bpg	55.1 FG%	73.0 FT%
G	Courtney Alexander	150	9.8 ppg	2.6 rpg	1.5 apg	0.63 spg	47.0 FG%
F	Lee Nailon	177	10.8 ppg	3.7 rpg	1.2 apg	0.75 spg	48.3 FG%
F	George Lynch	248	3.8 ppg	4.1 rpg	1.2 apg	0.89 spg	36.9 FG%
F	Robert Traylor	315	3.7 ppg	3.1 rpg	0.6 apg	0.61 bpg	42.6 FG%

New acquisition (R) Rookie (statistics for final college season) *PVR: Player Value Ranking (explanation on page 92)

3

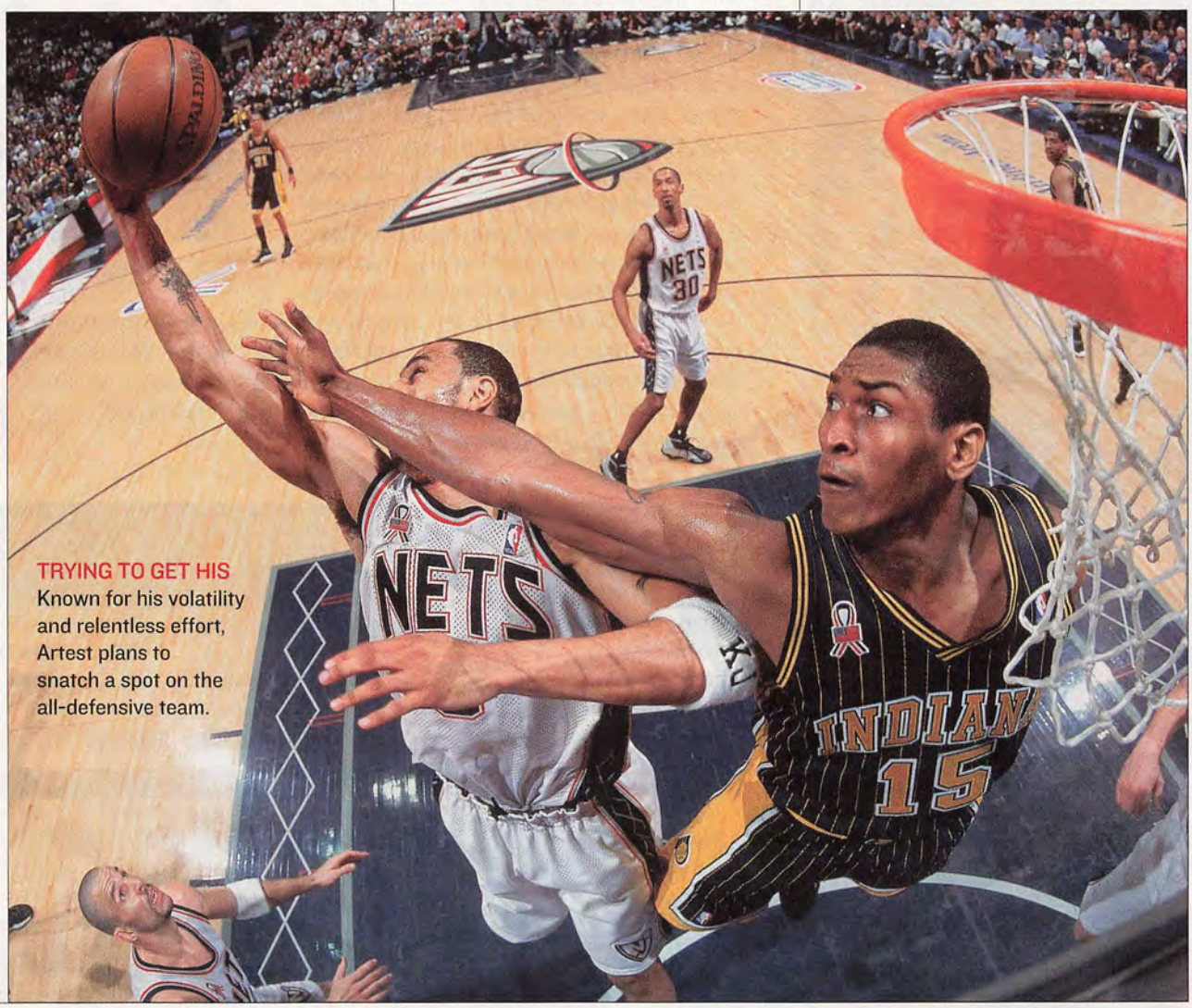
A young team will lean on a 22-year-old swingman with something to prove—and could go deep into the playoffs or cost the coach his job

INDIANA
PACERS

SWINGMAN RON ARTEST was driving his Blazer from his home outside Indianapolis to the Pacers' training camp in Cincinnati when he had an epiphany: *The NBA ought to assign someone to watch the defense being played in every game.* And just why would this be a good idea? "That way, when they hand out all the awards, the best defensive player wouldn't keep getting overlooked," Artest says. "I mean, I wasn't even second team all-defensive. That upsets me."

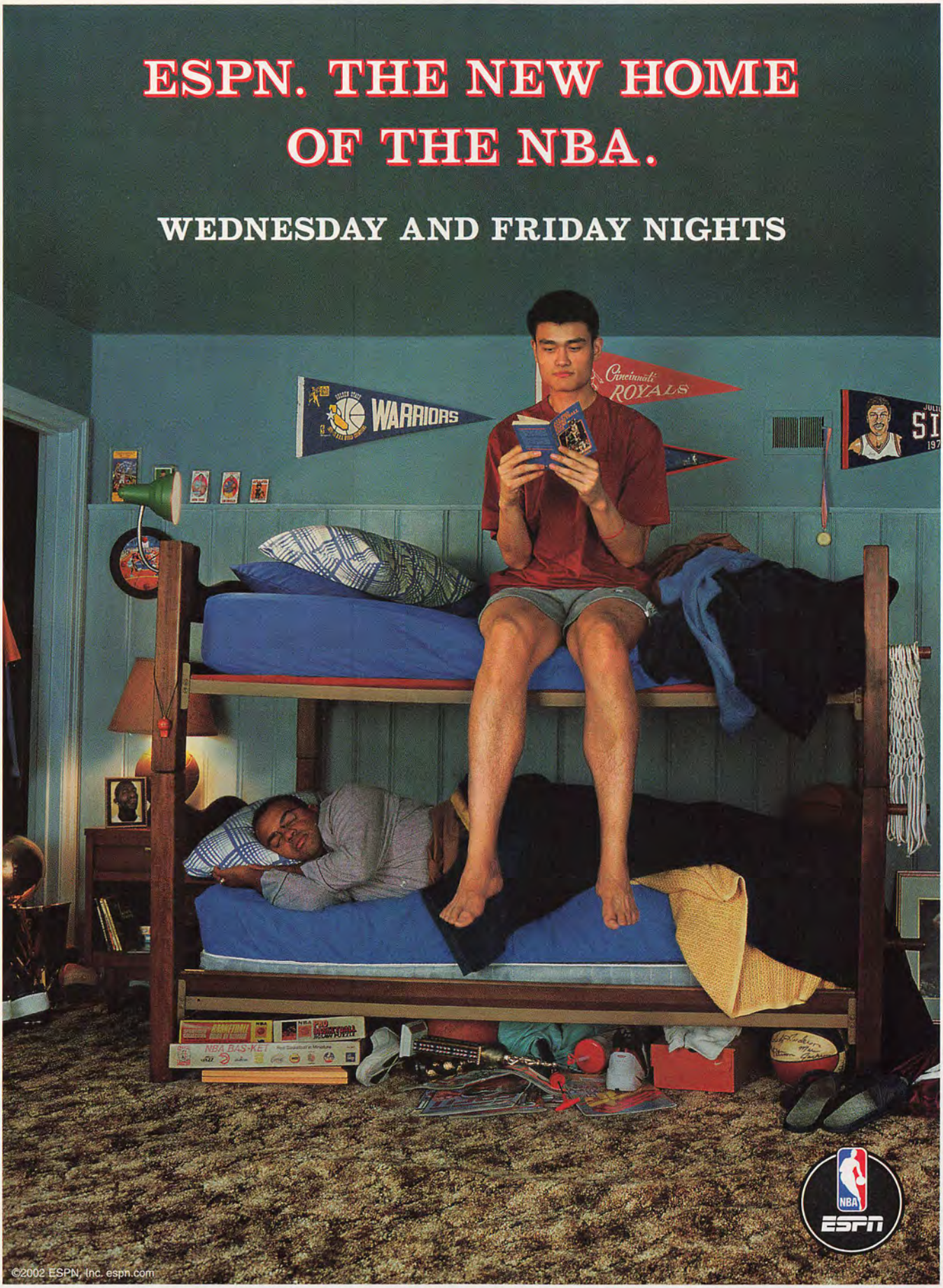
Artest might be tone deaf to subtlety, but he has a point. Last season he ranked second in the league in steals (2.56 per game) and rebounded well for a perimeter player (4.9). Plus, his on-the-ball D was exceptional. Just ask him. "I stopped all sorts of players, night-in, night-out," says Artest, who missed most of the preseason recovering from surgery on his left pinkie. "People don't score on me because a lot of times they don't even get a shot off."

Even if award voters overlook Artest, he is held in high regard by his peers—no less than Michael Jordan calls him "one of my favorite players." The fact that Artest's emotions are more raw than carpaccio sits fine with coach Isiah Thomas. "I want that intensity," Thomas says. "Ron's as committed as any player I've ever seen, and his work ethic is off



TRYING TO GET HIS Known for his volatility and relentless effort, Artest plans to snatch a spot on the all-defensive team.

MANNY MILLAN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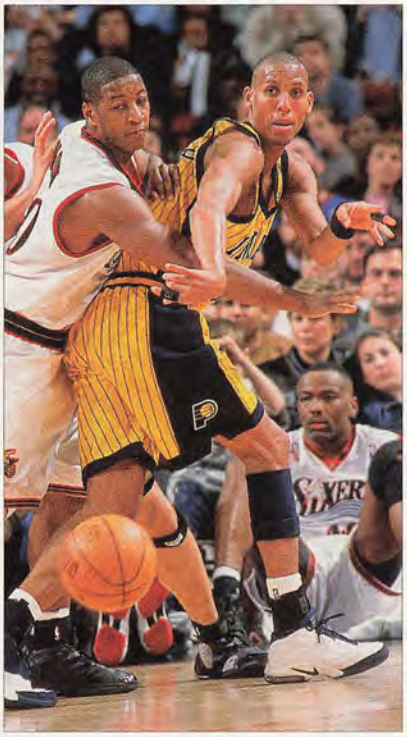


MANNY MILLAN

OLD SCHOOL On a team whose lone rookie is older than five players, a veteran hand like Miller's is a necessity.

the charts. There's no hidden agenda. He just says, 'I'm coming to play, and I'm kicking your ass.' And that's every night."

Acquired in the middle of last season from Chicago in the Jalen Rose trade, Artest, 22, is a pivotal figure in the Pacers' transition from a gerontocracy to a neonatal brigade. When Indiana made the Finals in 2000, the majority of the players were north of 30; this year's team will be among the youngest in NBA history. The lone rookie, 23-year-old guard Fred Jones from Oregon, is older than five Pacers. "There have been adjustments, no doubt," says Reggie Miller, who turned 37 in August, "but they're a good bunch of guys, and they keep me plugging along."

Indiana deserves credit for rebuilding without making a detour through Lotteryville. Still, this callow group needs to coalesce, something that never occurred last season. The Pacers could set the pace in the conference; they could also cost Thomas his job. The disarmingly candid defensive stopper predicts the former scenario. "Man, are we going to be good," says Artest. "If we don't win the East, that will be more disappointing than if I don't make first-team all-defense." —*L. Jon Wertheim*

FAST FACT Reggie Miller can become the first player to lead the NBA in free throw shooting three straight times since Rick Barry (1977–78 to '79–80).

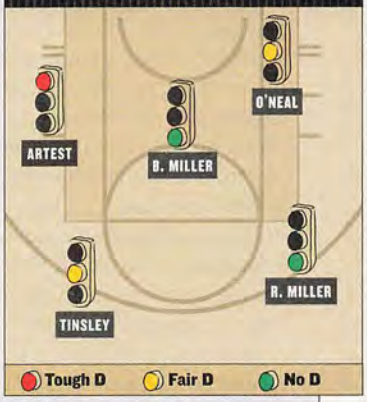
ENEMY LINES an opposing team's scout sizes up the Pacers

"If I had to rank **Isiah Thomas** with the other 28 coaches in the league, I'd put him in the 14-to-20 range. He communicates well, he understands the game, and his team doesn't make glaring mistakes. He's learning on the job, just like his players....Isiah's talking about putting in a sophisticated offense drawn from the triangle, John Wooden's high post and Bob Knight's motion. It's a good idea to make players dependent on each other, but that might be too much for these young guys to handle....My feeling is that they'll be best when they're pushing the ball. **Jamaal Tinsley** makes too many turnovers in the setup

BENDER IS STARTING TO TURN THE CORNER. NOT MANY BIG MEN HANDLE THE BALL BETTER.

game....**Jonathan Bender** is starting to turn the corner. There aren't many big men who handle the ball better, which is why Isiah is asking him to initiate the offense. He's an unselfish 7-foot swingman who can guard smaller, quicker players because he can afford to give them room—if they try to step back and shoot over him, he can close quickly to block shots.... **Al Harrington** looks pretty good after undergoing major knee surgery last January. He's important for them, he plays with a lot of enthusiasm and he looks ready to have a breakout year....**Jérmaine O'Neal** doesn't go strong to the basket. Most of his moves are going away to the baseline.... Having **Jeff Foster** coming off the bench at the two big spots is a luxury. He's extremely active and doesn't force anything....I like **Ron Artest**, though I don't buy into the talk that he's a budding Scottie Pippen. He doesn't have Pippen's athleticism and ball handling ability. Pippen was a gazelle, while Artest is more physical....Let's not forget **Reggie Miller**, who at 37 is still one of the most productive guys on their team. You see some stars continue to play even as their skills are deteriorating, but I don't think you'll see that with Miller—too much pride."

DEFENSIVE RATINGS



PROJECTED LINEUP

2001–02 record: 42–40 (tied for third in Central)
Points scored: 96.8 (9th) Points allowed: 96.5 (18th)
Coach: Isiah Thomas (third season with Pacers)

STARTERS	PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
SF Ron Artest	75	13.2 ppg	4.9 rpg	2.3 apg	2.56 spg	42.3 FG%
PF Jermaine O'Neal	23	19.0 ppg	10.5 rpg	1.6 apg	2.31 bpg	47.9 FG%
C Brad Miller	105	13.6 ppg	8.2 rpg	2.0 apg	1.00 spg	49.9 FG%
SG Reggie Miller	43	16.5 ppg	3.2 apg	1.11 spg	45.3 FG%	40.6 3FG%
PG Jamaal Tinsley	66	9.4 ppg	3.7 rpg	8.1 apg	1.73 spg	38.0 FG%
BENCH	**PVR***	**2001–02 KEY STATS**				
F Al Harrington	104	13.1 ppg	6.3 rpg	1.2 apg	0.93 spg	47.5 FG%
F Ron Mercer	109	13.9 ppg	3.4 rpg	2.4 apg	0.60 spg	39.7 FG%
F Jonathan Bender	192	7.4 ppg	3.1 rpg	0.8 apg	43.0 FG%	36.0 3FG%
F-C Jeff Foster	221	5.7 ppg	6.8 rpg	0.9 apg	0.46 bpg	44.9 FG%
G Erick Strickland	268	7.7 ppg	2.7 rpg	2.3 apg	38.9 FG%	38.5 3FG%

New acquisition (R) Rookie (statistics for final college season) *PVR: Player Value Ranking (explanation on page 92)

4

One high-scoring guard was sent packing and another, younger one arrived, but the heart of the team—stultifying defense—hasn't changed

DETROIT PISTONS

SHOOTING GUARD Richard (Rip) Hamilton was roughly one minute into his first intrasquad scrimmage with his new team this fall when he grasped the essence of Pistons basketball. Attempting to drive, he was slowed by a hand check from his defender, Jon Barry. When he then tried to dump an entry pass to a teammate underneath, 6' 11" Zeljko Rebraca cut off his passing lane. Frustrated, Hamilton chucked a 20-foot jumper that clanged off the rim. "Man," he muttered as he headed upcourt, "that's some *nasty* defense."

Thanks to that sclerotic D, Detroit enjoyed unexpected success last season. A team of mostly ego-deprived castoffs and role players held together by first-year coach Rick Carlisle, the Pistons won 50 games and prevailed in a playoff series for the first time since the Bad Boys era. Not only was 6' 9" Ben Wallace a near unanimous choice for Defensive Player of the Year, but also 6' 10" Clifford Robinson was named to the all-defensive second team. "No question it was a good year—a defining year—for the organization," says Wallace. "But when you play the right way, you don't feel like you're overachieving, you feel like you deserve to win."

There was, nevertheless, little sense of satisfaction over the summer. First, the Pistons upgraded at point guard, signing free agent Chauncey Billups, who is likely to take the starting role from Chucky Atkins. Then Detroit really tempted fate, trading its best player, guard Jerry Stackhouse, to the Wizards for Hamilton, guard Hubert Davis and Bobby Simmons, whom the Pistons released. At first glance the deal was a head scratcher: Stackhouse was the team's top scorer and locker room leader. But it made sense considering that Stackhouse's contract is up after 2003–04. The team was unwilling to commit max money to Stackhouse, and he was unwilling to rule out playing elsewhere. "There were no hard feelings on either side," says team president Joe Dumars. "And when you can get a young guy with Rip's talent, you can't pass that up."

In the 24-year-old Hamilton, the Pistons obtained an athletic 6' 6" player armed with a velveteen mid-range jumper who put up 20.0 points per game in 2001–02. Unlike his predecessor, Hamilton doesn't fire much from long range—he hit only 16 of 42 last season—nor is he going to attract double and triple teams. But so too is he unlikely to shoot a frigid 32.1% over 10 games, as Stackhouse did in last year's playoffs. Hamilton is also quick to volunteer that his defense, while worse than Stackhouse's, is underrated. "There's room to improve," he says. "But my D is good, man."

Still, he knows that should Detroit fail to improve on last season's breakthrough, "rip Hamilton" could become a pastime among the team's growing fan base. "Being the new guy, there's pressure, but it's a fun kind of pressure," he says. "You play hard, you stress defense and you win games."

Sounds like a plan. —L.J.W.

RIP ROARING Hamilton brings a snazzy mid-range game to Motown, but he's going to need to make noise on D as well.

ALLEN EINSTEIN/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES

FAST FACT Ben Wallace is the first Piston since Bob Lanier in 1974–75 to finish in the top 10 in both rebounding and shot blocking.

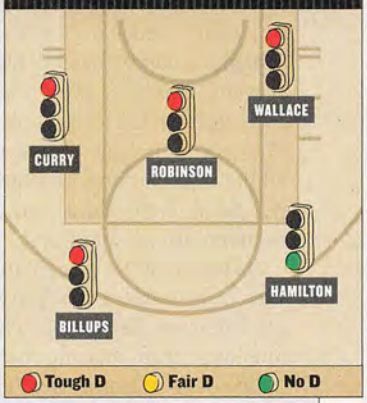
ENEMY LINES an opposing team's scout sizes up the Pistons

"They traded **Jerry Stackhouse** because he was going to demand maximum money, and they feel—as I do—that he's not a max player. If you forget about the contract issue, it was a lopsided trade. You can say that Stackhouse dominated the ball, but when times were tough he was the guy who could get to the basket and get to the line. They're going to need to find somebody to do that this year. The player Detroit got in return, **Richard Hamilton**, is inconsistent, and it's easy to disrupt his drives because he's so skinny....**Joe Dumars** has taken an interesting approach by building up his bench and

BILLUPS HAS FALLEN IN LOVE WITH HIS JUMP SHOT; HE WAS BETTER AS A ROOKIE AT DRIVING.

putting a system in place before he gets a superstar. If they bring in that guy in the next year or two, he will have to conform to the team. Usually it works the other way—the rest of the team conforms to the star....They'll be swinging Hamilton and **Chauncey Billups** around screens to try to make up for the loss of Stackhouse's offense. Billups has fallen in love with the jump shot; he was better as a rookie at driving and getting to the line....You have to focus as much on their reserves as on their starting unit. They can bring in **Hubert Davis** cold, and he'll hit two or three big shots in the fourth quarter to beat you....Even though they had **Ben Wallace**, their rebounding numbers weren't good. If **Zeljko Rebraca** starts at center, he'll have to be a better rebounder than **Cliff Robinson** was last year. If Rebraca doesn't work out, then we might see rookie **Mehmet Okur**....If Robinson plays more as a three, he'll lose the matchup advantage that he had when he was shooting over centers from the perimeter....In one season **Rick Carlisle** established a disciplined system with consistent offensive execution. The Pistons might not score a lot of points, but they're surprisingly fun to watch."

DEFENSIVE RATINGS



PROJECTED LINEUP

2001–02 record: 50–32 (first in Central)
Points scored: 94.3 (18th) Points allowed: 92.2 (6th)
Coach: Rick Carlisle (second season with Pistons)

STARTERS	PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
SF Michael Curry	211	4.0 ppg	2.0 rpg	1.5 apg	0.57 spg	45.3 FG%
PF Ben Wallace	19	7.6 ppg	13.0 rpg	3.48 bpg	1.73 spg	53.1 FG%
C Clifford Robinson	77	14.6 ppg	4.8 rpg	1.19 bpg	42.5 FG%	37.8 3FG%
SG Richard Hamilton	50	20.0 ppg	3.4 rpg	2.7 apg	0.60 spg	43.5 FG%
PG Chauncey Billups	58	12.5 ppg	2.8 rpg	5.5 apg	42.3 FG%	39.4 3FG%

BENCH	PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
F Corliss Williamson	82	13.6 ppg	4.1 rpg	1.2 apg	0.63 spg	51.0 FG%
G Jon Barry	169	9.0 ppg	3.3 apg	1.15 spg	48.9 FG%	46.9 3FG%
F-C Zeljko Rebraca	201	6.9 ppg	3.9 rpg	0.99 bpg	50.5 FG%	77.1 FT%
G Chucky Atkins	227	12.1 ppg	3.3 apg	0.91 spg	46.6 FG%	41.1 3FG%
F-C Mehmet Okur (R)	247	12.1 ppg	6.6 rpg	0.9 apg	47.2 FG%	38.9 3FG%

New acquisition (R) Rookie (statistics from EuroLeague) *PVR: Player Value Ranking (explanation on page 92)

5

There's a new, tough-minded running mate in the nation's capital, and he's eager to soften up foes so that His Airness can swoop in for the kill

WASHINGTON WIZARDS

JERRY STACKHOUSE, late of the Central Division–champion Pistons, has a theory about the psychological effects of a team's sudden improvement. "When something comes together like it did last year in Detroit," he says, "the coach and all 12 guys on the team think they did it. The general manager thought he pushed all the right buttons. The secretary who poured his coffee thinks she put just the right amount of sugar in it."

He laughs at the thought that maybe it was the java and not the Jerry that made the difference last season, when the Pistons went from missing the playoffs in 2000–01 to a spot in the Eastern Conference semifinals. But just ask Stackhouse about his new home in Washington, where he landed in a deal that sent guard Richard Hamilton to Detroit, and you'll find out who *he* thought was the key to the Pistons' turnaround. "Just like I did in Detroit," he says, "I think I can help a team that wasn't a playoff team become one."

Stackhouse may have a point. After spending the first seven years of his career as a one-trick pony—launching shots from anywhere inside half-court—he matured as a player last season, sharing the rock, playing team defense and shelving his ego for the good of the team. His reward? He failed to make the All-Star team, received little MVP consideration and says the Pistons balked at a new contract that would pay him the maximum he can earn under NBA rules. "People here really appreciate my value and what I bring to the team," Stackhouse says of his new home, "more so than they did in Detroit."

Foremost among the appreciative new teammates is Michael Jordan, 39, who's expected to log fewer minutes per game than the 34.9 he played last season, when wear and tear forced him to miss the final 22 games. (He had knee surgery in February and has chosen to sit out the preseason.) The addition of Stackhouse and free-agent guards Bryon Russell and Larry Hughes should allow coach Doug Collins to stick to his plan of playing Jordan about 30 minutes a game. Whether Jordan sticks to his own stated intention of being a sixth man is a different matter. "He's talked about it," says Stackhouse, "but I know when he starts smelling that popcorn, he's going to want to be out there from the start."

Which raises the question of how two guys so accustomed to being the focal point of an offense will mesh. Collins says he sees no problem in the pairing and professes a love for Stackhouse's "passion and toughness," while Jordan notes that his new running mate is physical and "challenges the bigger guys." Translation: Stackhouse will be attacking the rim so Jordan doesn't have to. "Mike's talked to me about getting us some free throw attempts, getting us into the bonus," says Stackhouse. "Either way, we look at it like it's going to be us and three other guys out there."

In a weak Eastern Conference, the Big Two plus the Other Three should be enough to confirm Stackhouse's Theory of Me. —C.B.

STAYING POWER More depth among the perimeter players should cut down on Jordan's minutes and keep him fresh.

BOB ROSATO

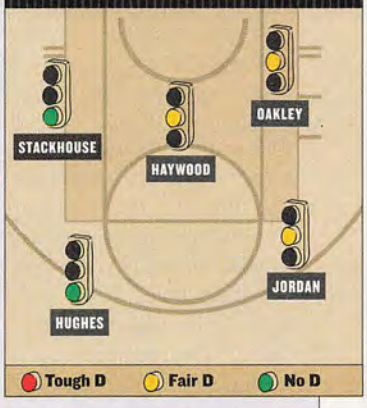
FAST FACT Michael Jordan has more fellow Tar Heels as teammates this year (Brendan Haywood, Jerry Stackhouse) than he did in his Bulls career.

ENEMY LINES an opposing team's scout sizes up the Wizards

"They're better with **Michael Jordan** coming off the bench. At his age it's better for him to play against second-line players or first-line players who are a little winded. Plus, he'll be a big help to the young teammates coming into the game with him. Jordan's lack of mobility and quickness shows most in his defense. He has trouble staying in front of shooting guards; he can do better with small forwards whom he can bang and grab....The main questions are at center and point guard. **Brendan Haywood** wasn't known as a hard worker when he entered the league last year, but he came to camp in better shape. They won't worry about his numbers so much as his effort—all they want is for him to play hard every night....I haven't given up on **Larry Hughes** as a point guard. This is his fifth season, and I believe that having number 23 on the team makes young players grow up and develop a better understanding of the game. Plus the Wizards are going to push the ball, which plays to Hughes's strength....They'll be decent at power forward with **Charles Oakley**, **Christian Laettner**, **Etan Thomas** and **Kwame Brown**, who looks ready to contribute this year. He's quick with the ball, a pretty good ball handler, and he's got a great spin move to the rim....**Jared Jeffries** doesn't have NBA shooting range, but he's a 6' 11" guy who can play defense and make plays, and he'll score enough off loose balls and offensive rebounds....**Juan Dixon** is a rhythm player. He might struggle at times, but then he'll get a couple of easy baskets and his confidence will shoot right up. Dixon is going to have to bulk up to become more durable, though....There was a carnival atmosphere around Jordan's comeback last year. Nobody is paying much attention this time, but this is a much better team—especially if they can manage Jordan's minutes and keep him fresh for the stretch run."

THEY'RE GOING TO PUSH THE BALL, WHICH PLAYS TO HUGHES'S STRENGTH AS A POINT GUARD.

DEFENSIVE RATINGS



PROJECTED LINEUP

2001-02 record: 37-45 (fifth in Atlantic)
Points scored: 92.8 (21st) Points allowed: 94.2 (11th)
Coach: Doug Collins (second season with Wizards)

STARTERS	PVR*	2001-02 KEY STATS				
SF Jerry Stackhouse	33	21.4 ppg	4.1 rpg	5.3 apg	39.7 FG%	28.7 3FG%
PF Charles Oakley	232	3.8 ppg	6.0 rpg	2.0 apg	0.86 spg	36.9 FG%
C Brendan Haywood	163	5.1 ppg	5.2 rpg	1.47 bpg	49.3 FG%	60.6 FT%
SG Michael Jordan	30	22.9 ppg	5.7 rpg	5.2 apg	1.42 spg	41.6 FG%
PG Larry Hughes	93	12.3 ppg	3.4 rpg	4.3 apg	1.55 spg	42.3 FG%

BENCH	PVR*	2001-02 KEY STATS				
F Kwame Brown	133	4.5 ppg	3.5 rpg	0.8 apg	0.46 bpg	38.7 FG%
F-C Christian Laettner	179	7.1 ppg	5.3 rpg	2.6 apg	1.05 spg	46.4 FG%
G-F Bryon Russell	196	9.6 ppg	4.5 rpg	0.97 spg	38.0 FG%	34.1 3FG%
G Chris Whitney	218	10.2 ppg	1.9 rpg	3.8 apg	41.8 FG%	40.6 3FG%
F Jared Jeffries (R)	222	15.0 ppg	7.6 rpg	2.1 apg	1.28 bpg	45.7 FG%

New acquisition (R) Rookie (statistics for final college season) *PVR: Player Value Ranking (explanation on page 92)

EASTERN CONFERENCE CENTRAL

6

With Glenn Robinson gone, Tim Thomas has a chance to prove that he's worth his big contract—and that he can fetch more wins than Big Dog

MILWAUKEE BUCKS

TIM THOMAS was picking up his nephew at a Philadelphia hotel in August when he ran into 76ers star Allen Iverson. "I hear you guys are about to make a trade," Iverson said, referring to rumors of a deal involving Glenn (Big Dog) Robinson. Moments later Thomas's cellphone rang. It was Bucks general manager Ernie Grunfeld, saying that he had indeed shipped Robinson to the Hawks for forward Toni Kukoc, forward Leon Smith and a 2003 first-round pick. The 6' 10" Thomas was now Milwaukee's starting small forward. "I wanted the season to start the very next day," he says.

If Thomas, 25, can successfully replace the Big Dog, the bite could be back in the Bucks. Last year they were supposed to contend for the title, but nagging injuries to the backcourt of Ray Allen and Sam Cassell, along with poor team chemistry, cost them down the stretch. Milwaukee suffered an epic swoon, losing 14 of its final 19 games to become the first team in NBA history to fail to make the playoffs despite leading its division after the ides of March.

In need of a shakeup, the Bucks subtracted one of their Big Three. Though they will miss Robinson's consistent scoring, they feel Thomas's ball handling and willingness to share the rock will make them better. "Tim can do a lot more things," Allen says. "If he doesn't score 20 but gets us two or three steals a game, that's just as big." Thomas's quickness and immense wingspan alone should improve a defense that ranked 22nd last season. The trick for Thomas will be to maintain focus at both ends. Last season, his second after signing a six-year, $67 million deal, he averaged a respectable 11.7 points and 4.1 rebounds but shot only 42.0% and put up far more three-pointers (291) than free throw attempts (179). He also had too many lapses on D. "When Glenn was in the game, Tim had a tendency to kind of disappear or fade into the shadows," Allen says. "As big as he is, and as talented as he is, we can't have that."

Over the summer, Thomas says, he rose nearly every morning at six to lift weights in his basement, then went to the track at Villanova, where he ran 100-yard wind sprints with a football tucked under his arm. He also spent a week in Atlanta working one-on-one with four-time All-Star Bernard King, a former teammate of Grunfeld's who helped Thomas add some low-post moves to his already solid face-the-basket arsenal. "He taught me some tricks but mostly just helped me with footwork and positioning," Thomas says.

While the Bucks could sorely use more inside punch, they say that they don't need Thomas to match Robinson's 20.7 points per game. Coach George Karl says he'll take 16 points and eight rebounds as long as Thomas provides passing and consistent defense. "With Glenn, you'd get spectacular," Karl says, "but you'd also get disappointment sometimes." The Bucks are counting on Thomas to be solidly in between.

—Marty Burns

DONALD MIRALLE/GETTY IMAGES

TIM'S TIME A 6' 10" jumping jack with a world of talent, the 25-year-old Thomas has to be more consistent at both ends.

FAST FACT Three Bucks—Ray Allen, Michael Redd and Tim Thomas—share the NBA record for most three-pointers made in one half (eight).

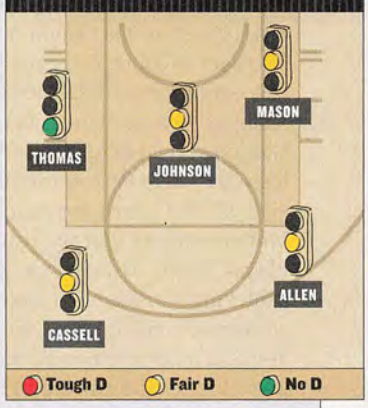
ENEMY LINES an opposing team's scout sizes up the Bucks

"Glenn Robinson was a proven 20-point scorer, and you don't find a lot of them. He wasn't as bad a defender as he's been made out to be, and he was a tough player who was willing to take the shot in the big moments. Now they're replacing him with **Tim Thomas** in the hope that Thomas will help change their identity and make them more of a defensive team. That's asking a lot of a guy who has had an undistinguished career. Thomas has all the tools, but he has yet to show the production at either end....They had three guys who could score 25 points. What is their strength now? One year ago this

ONE YEAR AGO THIS LOOKED LIKE A TEAM ON THE RISE, BUT THAT IS NO LONGER THE CASE.

looked like a team on the rise, but that is no longer the case....As much as I love **Ray Allen**, he's a guy who lets the game come to him. Now that Robinson is gone, can Allen become the leader who carries that team? They're going to be in danger if Allen and Thomas don't take on these new roles....It's good they matched the Mavericks' offer and kept **Michael Redd**, because it wouldn't be wise to depend much on **Toni Kukoc** coming off the bench. It's been years since he's produced....Very few people in the league want to win more than **Sam Cassell**. He's a smart defender in that he knows how to shade guys and how to play screens, but at least one time a game he'll get caught up in yelling at an official or somebody else and allow his man to sneak by for an uncontested shot....**Ervin Johnson** used to be a good defensive player, but he seemed to slow down last year....**Anthony Mason**'s game is in decline, and his arrival hurt them last season. He took over the ball, walked it up the floor and changed the pace of their game. Grind-it-out basketball is not the Bucks' style. He's still their only big low-post threat, though Cassell might be their most effective player down there."

DEFENSIVE RATINGS



PROJECTED LINEUP

2001-02 record: 41-41 (fifth in Central)
Points scored: 97.5 (8th) Points allowed: 97.7 (22nd)
Coach: George Karl (fifth season with Bucks)

STARTERS		PVR*	2001-02 KEY STATS				
SF	Tim Thomas	54	11.7 ppg	4.1 rpg	1.4 apg	42.0 FG%	32.6 3FG%
PF	Anthony Mason	74	9.6 ppg	7.9 rpg	4.2 apg	0.70 spg	50.5 FG%
C	Ervin Johnson	296	2.6 ppg	5.8 rpg	1.01 bpg	46.1 FG%	45.5 FT%
SG	Ray Allen	15	21.8 ppg	4.5 rpg	3.9 apg	46.2 FG%	43.4 3FG%
PG	Sam Cassell	44	19.7 ppg	4.2 rpg	6.7 apg	1.22 spg	46.3 FG%
BENCH		**PVR***	**2001-02 KEY STATS**				
G	Michael Redd	131	11.4 ppg	3.3 rpg	1.4 apg	48.3 FG%	44.4 3FG%
F	Toni Kukoc	185	9.9 ppg	3.7 rpg	3.6 apg	41.9 FG%	31.0 3FG%
F	Jason Caffey	228	4.3 ppg	2.2 rpg	0.5 apg	0.22 bpg	50.0 FG%
F	Marcus Haislip (R)	271	16.7 ppg	6.7 rpg	1.0 apg	1.76 bpg	51.8 FG%
C	Dan Gadzuric (R)	281	11.7 ppg	7.7 rpg	0.7 apg	1.27 bpg	55.4 FG%

New acquisition (R) Rookie (statistics for final college season) *PVR: Player Value Ranking (explanation on page 92)

7

BOSTON CELTICS

A questionable trade for an underachieving big man puts more pressure on a franchise that would love to reach the Eastern finals a second straight year

THOUGH UNPOPULAR owner Paul Gaston recently agreed to sell the Celtics for an NBA-record $360 million, his previous decisions may haunt the franchise for years to come. By refusing to retain free-agent forward Rodney Rogers last summer because of luxury-tax concerns, Gaston forced G.M. Chris Wallace to look elsewhere for a scorer to take pressure off Paul Pierce and Antoine Walker. Wallace admits that the resulting five-player trade, which brought underachieving Vin Baker to Boston, was "a calculated risk," because the four years and $32 million left on Baker's contract gives the team a third player at maximum salary and restricts its ability to make a major trade until at least the 2005–06 season.

Seattle knows that it's no good relying on the 6' 11" Baker: The Sonics were 26–29 with Baker in the lineup last year and 23–4 when he was out. Will his inside game complement the Celtics' three-point shooting? Or will he ruin the Celtics' chemistry in much the same way as Anthony Mason disrupted the perimeter-friendly Bucks last season?

After five seasons in Seattle, three of them unproductive, Baker, 30, is elated to be heading to New England. (His hometown of Old Saybrook, Conn., is two hours from Boston.) In August he checked into a hotel near the Celtics' practice facility and spent seven weeks working himself into shape. "This is the biggest season of my career," he says.

Baker's arrival coincides with the end of the honeymoon for coach Jim O'Brien, who guided the Celtics to the Eastern Conference finals last year but couldn't get his squad past New Jersey. Now, not only must he rejuvenate Baker, but he also must find a way to survive without a true point guard to replace Kenny Anderson, who had his most useful season before going to Seattle in the Baker trade.

O'Brien will depend on a trio of hybrids at guard—Tony Delk, Shammond Williams (who arrived with Baker from Seattle) and rookie J.R. Bremer—with just 68 career NBA starts among them. All O'Brien asks is that they escort the ball safely upcourt before handing it over

SCORING MACHINE Pierce put up career numbers last season, averaging 26.1 points, 3.2 assists and 6.9 rebounds.

to Pierce and Walker, who have missed only 21 games in their combined 10 NBA seasons. As good as Pierce is, though, the onus is on Walker, who raised his game to another level while leading Boston to the conference finals last season. This year O'Brien says he wouldn't be surprised if Walker's numbers reach MVP heights.

"This is the first time since I've been here that we can look at [championship] number 17 as a real possibility," says Walker. To do so Boston must attack this season with a sense of urgency. Who knows how long Baker will remain interested or how long the East will remain the conference of parity? —I.T.

JOHN BEVER

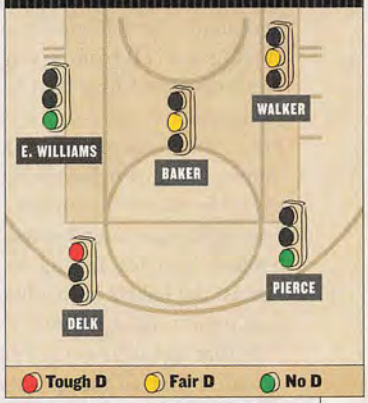
FAST FACT Last season Paul Pierce (210) and Antoine Walker (222) became the first teammates to each hit more than 200 three-pointers.

ENEMY LINES an opposing team's scout sizes up the Celtics

"They are going to be weaker. Kenny Anderson gave his best performance in four or five years, and he's gone. His backup, Erick Strickland, is gone, sixth man Rodney Rogers is gone, and I have doubts about the replacements....Anderson gave them veteran leadership, he was able to blend in and be unselfish, he could run the offense under pressure, and he rebounded well for a point guard. Their only true point guard is **J.R. Bremer**, an undrafted rookie from St. Bonaventure, and you can't ask him to run a playoff team. **Tony Delk** and **Shammond Williams** are going to struggle at that position, even if all they're asked to do is bring the ball up. Strickland would have been better than any of the guys they have now....This season I'm telling our guys to deny the ball to **Antoine Walker**, make him work hard bringing it up and push him out whenever you can. If he isn't handling the ball then who is?...I even think they're going to miss Vitaly Potapenko, a big, strong guy who could bang and hold the fort. **Vin Baker** is going to have to play mainly at center, and he's not strong enough. Baker's problem is that he thinks he's working hard when he really isn't. He's going to have to adjust his game offensively; **Paul Pierce** is more effective in the post than Baker is....They're looking at a weaker bench, which means their defensive intensity is likely to suffer. They'll struggle on back-to-backs, and Walker and Pierce aren't going to want to practice because they'll be working so hard during the games. They need something from **Kedrick Brown**, but he was in junior college two seasons ago, and he's a year away.... Pierce is one of the top five scorers in the league, but he's an arm-waver on defense. Let's give it to assistant coach **Dick Harter**, who turned a bunch of average or poor defenders into a good defensive team last year. He has a much tougher job this time."

VIN BAKER'S PROBLEM IS THAT HE THINKS HE'S WORKING HARD WHEN HE REALLY ISN'T.

DEFENSIVE RATINGS



PROJECTED LINEUP

2001–02 record: 49–33 (second in Atlantic)
Points scored: 96.4 (12th) Points allowed: 94.1 (9th tie)
Coach: Jim O'Brien (third season with Celtics)

STARTERS		PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
SF	Eric Williams	125	6.4 ppg	3.0 rpg	1.5 apg	1.04 spg	37.4 FG%
PF	Antoine Walker	12	22.1 ppg	8.8 rpg	5.0 apg	39.4 FG%	34.4 3FG%
C	Vin Baker	81	14.1 ppg	6.4 rpg	1.3 apg	0.65 bpg	48.5 FG%
SG	Paul Pierce	5	26.1 ppg	6.9 rpg	1.88 spg	44.2 FG%	40.4 3FG%
PG	Tony Delk	158	9.5 ppg	3.2 rpg	2.1 apg	38.4 FG%	31.3 3FG%
BENCH		**PVR***	**2001–02 KEY STATS**				
G	Shammond Williams	187	4.4 ppg	1.3 rpg	1.7 apg	0.42 spg	42.0 FG%
C	Tony Battie	193	6.9 ppg	6.5 rpg	0.91 bpg	0.81 spg	54.1 FG%
G-F	Kedrick Brown	261	2.2 ppg	1.7 rpg	0.5 apg	0.62 spg	32.9 FG%
G	J.R. Bremer (R)	295	24.6 ppg	4.7 rpg	3.1 apg	1.87 spg	41.3 FG%
F	Walter McCarty	330	3.8 ppg	2.3 rpg	0.7 apg	44.4 FG%	39.4 3FG%

New acquisition (R) Rookie (statistics for final college season) *PVR: Player Value Ranking (explanation on page 92)

8

PHILADELPHIA 76ERS

In trading for sharpshooter Keith Van Horn, the team gets a much-needed second scorer—at the expense of some of its vaunted grit

AT FIRST Keith Van Horn thought it was a joke. While returning to his Utah summer home from the wedding of Nets teammate Kerry Kittles in August, Van Horn got a call from his agent, David Falk, who told him that he had been traded to the 76ers with center Todd MacCulloch for center Dikembe Mutombo. "I didn't believe him," Van Horn says. He wasn't surprised that he had been dealt—not after Kenyon Martin had blasted him for failing to "bring it" against the Lakers in the Finals—but the destination was a shock.

Before the 1997 draft Van Horn had declared that all things considered, he would rather be anywhere *but* Philadelphia. He refused to work out for the Sixers, who nevertheless took him with the No. 2 pick and, hours later, shipped him to New Jersey in an eight-player deal. Though Van Horn insists now that he would not have demanded a trade or staged a holdout in Philly if the Sixers had kept him, he's glad his arrival was delayed five years. "Times have changed," Van Horn says. "This team is better now, and I've matured as a player. I think I'm a very good fit."

The big question is how well Van Horn fits with the Answer. Allen Iverson won his third scoring title last season, with a 31.4 average, but the 6-foot guard needed 27.8 shots a game and connected on a career-low 39.8%. The 6' 10" Van Horn has averaged 18.2 points in the NBA while never shooting worse than 42.6% from the field in a season. The knock on him is his unremarkable defense and rebounding; that he led New Jersey last season with 7.5 boards a game—and his average of 7.6 over his career—belies his Mr. Softee image. "Our league has a tendency to harp on what a guy can't do rather than what he can," says Sixers coach Larry Brown. "Keith can post up, he can score on the perimeter and he understands how to play. He'll be playing with a great offensive player in Allen, and that's going to open up opportunities for him."

Van Horn's ability to make a perimeter jump shot, long the Achilles' heel of Brown's tough-minded teams, should help him gain acceptance from Iverson and the Philly fans he spurned in '97. Brown is also excited about free-agent signees Monty Williams, a 6' 8" forward, and Greg Buckner, a 6' 4" guard; the coach likens both to former Sixers forward George Lynch, whom Brown admired for his gritty play. Another plus: Unlike last year, guards Iverson, Aaron McKie and Eric Snow will not be starting the season on the injured list. Whether all this will be enough to propel Philadelphia back to the top of the East, though, may well depend on a man who once did all he could to avoid playing for the Sixers.

"The trade was shocking at first, but as time passed, I felt better and better about the situation," Van Horn says. "To go from last year's Eastern Conference champs to the Eastern Conference champs of two years ago, there's not a lot to complain about."

—Pete McEntegart

ALL OR NOTHING Under pressure to carry the offense, Iverson had the worst shooting season of his six-year career.

MANNY MILLAN

FAST FACT For the third straight year Allen Iverson's average (31.4 points) more than doubled that of the Sixers' No. 2 scorer (Derrick Coleman's 15.1).

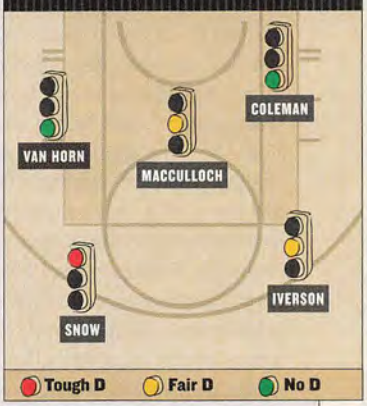
ENEMY LINES an opposing team's scout sizes up the 76ers

"When I think of the team that went to the Finals two years ago, I think of a club that was tough defensively and that mentally beat you down. I just don't see them having that kind of energy anymore....This is a beat-up team. The only guys who played 80 games for them last year were Matt Harpring and Dikembe Mutombo, and both are gone....When they traded Mutombo [to the Nets], they gave away a big defensive presence, and in return they got more scoring with **Todd MacCulloch** and **Keith Van Horn**. But both of those guys are soft.... The Sixers like their defenders to overplay on the perimeter, but will they be able to do that know-

WILL THE SIXERS OVERPLAY ON THE PERIMETER KNOWING THEY DON'T HAVE A SHOT BLOCKER?

ing they don't have a shot blocker covering their backs?... You could argue that **Derrick Coleman** might help them defensively around the basket, but he's coming off knee surgery, and he has a long history of being unreliable.... **Eric Snow**'s injuries haven't affected him, because he's an overachiever who never played above the rim anyway....**Aaron McKie** seems like he's always hurt, but I don't see him changing his physical style. That's how he has to play....**Allen Iverson** is constantly banged up, because he plays harder than anybody. He is the toughest pound-for-pound player in the NBA....It will be interesting to see how much they try to establish Van Horn. In the past the only guy they've run plays for has been Iverson....Whenever Iverson and **Larry Brown** are having one of their tiffs, I find myself asking, who is going to be the first to break—Allen or Larry? I never find myself thinking it's going to be Allen....It seems like they have a lot of problems, but that's always the way it is in Philly. There's always some kind of soap-opera drama going on—somebody's hurt, something's going on with Iverson or Coleman, somebody's asking Brown if he's going to quit. They should call their pregame show *As the Sixers Turn*."

DEFENSIVE RATINGS



PROJECTED LINEUP

2001–02 record: 43–39 (fourth in Atlantic)
Points scored: 91.0 (26th) Points allowed: 89.4 (2nd)
Coach: Larry Brown (sixth season with 76ers)

STARTERS	PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
SF **Keith Van Horn**	51	14.8 ppg	7.5 rpg	2.0 apg	43.3 FG%	34.5 3FG%
PF **Derrick Coleman**	155	15.1 ppg	8.8 rpg	1.7 apg	0.88 bpg	45.0 FG%
C **Todd MacCulloch**	137	9.7 ppg	6.1 rpg	1.3 apg	1.44 bpg	53.1 FG%
SG **Allen Iverson**	11	31.4 ppg	4.5 rpg	5.5 apg	2.80 spg	39.8 FG%
PG **Eric Snow**	102	12.1 ppg	3.5 rpg	6.6 apg	1.56 spg	44.2 FG%
BENCH	**PVR***	**2001–02 KEY STATS**				
G-F **Aaron McKie**	141	12.2 ppg	4.0 rpg	3.7 apg	1.17 spg	44.9 FG%
G-F **Monty Williams**	183	7.1 ppg	3.5 rpg	1.4 apg	0.72 spg	54.7 FG%
G-F **Greg Buckner**	259	5.8 ppg	3.9 rpg	1.1 apg	0.70 spg	52.5 FG%
G **John Salmons (R)**	264	13.1 ppg	6.0 rpg	6.1 apg	1.78 spg	46.1 FG%
C **Samuel Dalembert**	318	1.5 ppg	2.0 rpg	0.38 bpg	44.0 FG%	38.9 FT%

New acquisition (R) Rookie (statistics for final college season) *PVR: Player Value Ranking (explanation on page 82)

9

With a new forward and a healthy center, the front line is packed with promise—but not enough to make good on the guarantee of a playoff berth

ATLANTA HAWKS

NEW FORWARD Glenn (Big Dog) Robinson would like to make this perfectly clear: When it comes to a certain former Bucks teammate, bygones will not be bygones. "Ray Allen disappointed me by talking about how I'm not a team player," says Robinson of the All-Star shooting guard, who accused the Big Dog of never passing. "That's a coward move. It's easy to talk about somebody when you don't have to see them every day. Whatever I say, I can say twice. Ray Allen never said that to me." He looks away for a second, then says it again, more emphatically: "A coward move, that's what it was."

If Robinson's feeling about his old team could inspire a series called *Everybody Hates Ray Allen*, his sentiments about his new one could make for a syrupy Disney flick. When he learned of his August trade to the Hawks (in exchange for Toni Kukoc, Leon Smith and a 2003 first-round pick), Robinson, 29, began rubbing his palms together. "I was praying I would pass the physical and Toni would too," he says. "I've always thought about living and playing in Atlanta. I'm in my prime, and this is a new beginning."

After the arrival of Georgia-born Shareef Abdur-Rahim from Vancouver last off-season, Robinson becomes the second All-Star forward in two years who's been overjoyed to come to Atlanta. While this may say more about where the pair was coming from—and Robinson's desire to put behind him charges made in July of misdemeanor domestic battery, assault and possession of a firearm (a court date is set for November in Chicago)—the Hawks will take whatever they can get, mired as they are in a three-year postseason drought, their longest since the mid-1970s. Confident that better days are ahead, Atlanta is offering $125 back to each of its season-ticket holders if the team doesn't make the playoffs. If it does, those fans will get into the opener for free. "I didn't want to do it if I didn't think we were going to turn the corner," says coach Lon Kruger, who came up with the idea last spring, then ran it by the Hawks' top players before going public. "More importantly, though, I wanted our players to know we had confidence in them."

Much of that confidence stems from the team's upgraded front line of Abdur-Rahim, Robinson and center Theo Ratliff, the league's top shot blocker in 2000–01, who missed all but three games last season with a cartilage tear in his right hip. So far Ratliff has looked sharp after eight months of what he calls "continuous rehab," working to strengthen his back and abdomen, where most of his muscle loss occurred. "He's the key," says Robinson. "It's all about big Theo."

As for Big Dog, and his purported tendency to shoot first and shoot second, Kruger is not worried. "He recognizes that he's got some other guys around him who can score," he says. "I don't think it will be a problem."

A guard in Milwaukee might be inclined to disagree. —C.B.

PARTING SHOT Firing not-so-kind words back at one of his old Milwaukee mates, Robinson is happy to be in Atlanta.

SCOTT CUNNINGHAM/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES

FAST FACT In two seasons Lon Kruger has failed to make the playoffs. No Hawks coach has gone three years and not reached the postseason.

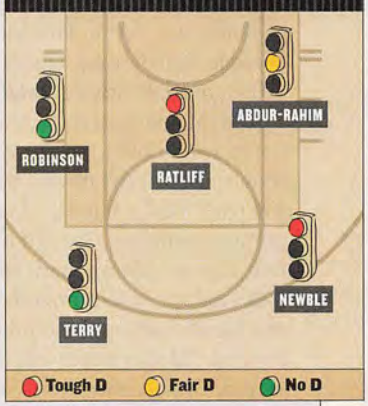
ENEMY LINES an opposing team's scout sizes up the Hawks

"They're going to make a run at the playoffs, even though the backcourt is thin and highly questionable. They want **Jason Terry** to play the point, but it's complicated: They need his scoring, because they're pretty weak at shooting guard, but how is he going to fit himself into the offense while he's trying to organize the front line?...I doubt whether **Dan Dickau** is going to give them anything at the point as a rookie. He's not quick enough to beat defenders with his dribble, and in preseason he was late with his passes. He's going to have to prove he's a deadly three-point shooter if he wants to make it....The

ABDUR-RAHIM PLAYS HARD; NOW HE HAS TO SHOW HE CAN DO THE THINGS THAT WIN GAMES.

strength of the team is going to be the front line, where they have three guys with All-Star experience and an excellent backup in **Nazr Mohammed**. **Shareef Abdur-Rahim** has averaged 21 points and eight rebounds over his career, but it's easier to do that on a losing team. If the opponents know they're going to beat you, they won't worry about letting you get your numbers. Abdur-Rahim seems to play hard all the time, but now he has to show that he can do the things that win games. **Theo Ratliff** looks like he's back to where he was a couple of years ago before all of his injuries—fresh legs, active on the boards, and he's got his quick little post-up game back on track. His shot blocking will allow their other guys to play more aggressively on defense, though I doubt they'll become a good defensive team. And **Glenn Robinson** has averaged at least 20 points in seven of his eight seasons....Still, I think the Bucks may have dealt Robinson at just the right time. He was beginning to show decline the last couple of years, and his attitude seemed to be getting worse. He also made some big baskets for them. So who's going to take those shots for Atlanta—Robinson or Abdur-Rahim? That's something they'll have to work out."

DEFENSIVE RATINGS



PROJECTED LINEUP

2001-02 record: 33-49 (sixth in Central)
Points scored: 94.0 (19th) Points allowed: 98.3 (25th)
Coach: Lon Kruger (third season with Hawks)

STARTERS		PVR*	2001-02 KEY STATS				
SF	Glenn Robinson	34	20.7 ppg	6.2 rpg	2.5 apg	1.47 spg	46.7 FG%
PF	Shareef Abdur-Rahim	13	21.2 ppg	9.0 rpg	3.1 apg	1.27 spg	46.1 FG%
C	Theo Ratliff	86	8.7 ppg	5.3 rpg	2.67 bpg	50.0 FG%	54.5 FT%
SG	Ira Newble	209	8.0 ppg	5.3 rpg	1.1 apg	0.90 spg	49.8 FG%
PG	Jason Terry	55	19.3 ppg	3.5 rpg	5.7 apg	1.85 spg	43.0 FG%

BENCH		PVR*	2001-02 KEY STATS				
G	Dion Glover	200	8.9 ppg	3.1 rpg	1.5 apg	0.82 spg	42.1 FG%
C	Nazr Mohammed	202	9.7 ppg	7.9 rpg	0.74 bpg	0.77 spg	46.1 FG%
F	Alan Henderson	230	5.5 ppg	3.7 rpg	0.58 bpg	50.9 FG%	53.3 FT%
G	Emanual Davis	269	6.6 ppg	2.6 rpg	2.4 apg	0.96 spg	35.4 FG%
F	Darvin Ham	292	4.3 ppg	2.9 rpg	1.0 apg	0.53 bpg	56.9 FG%

New acquisition (R) Rookie (statistics for final college season) *PVR: Player Value Ranking (explanation on page 92)

10

ORLANDO MAGIC

Thinner in the wallet but still hefty in the waistline, Shawn Kemp seems ill-equipped to carry this center-starved franchise

ALL SUMMER, people wanted to know. Not just the media types, but teammates and buddies. They would call him up, guys like Gary Payton, all asking the same question with the same tone of incredulity. *Sixteen million?* Are you *kidding* me?

And Magic power forward Shawn Kemp would offer the same cryptic response: "You can't always believe what you read." Still, what they'd read seemed pretty astounding. To gain unrestricted free agency Kemp had agreed to a $30.5 million buyout from the Trail Blazers, sacrificing some $16 million left on his deal. "Money never was the reason I played," Kemp said after a recent practice, sweat streaming down his magnificent shar-pei brow. "If you're a player, you want to play—not take all that money and sit on the bench."

Kemp will get his wish in Orlando because, in an economic twist, the team that is paying him $1 million a year needs him far more than the one that was paying him $20 million a year ever did. His willing swap of money for minutes does little to diminish the potentially inspirational, *Behind the Music* aspect to the saga of Shawn Kemp, who after appearing in each All-Star Game from 1993 to '98 has fought a losing battle with his weight and last season served a suspension for violating the league's drug policy. "It would be a great story," says coach Doc Rivers, "but let's be honest. I'm hoping he makes it back because it helps this team. I'm not Mother Teresa here."

Why such anticipation for a 300-plus-pound 32-year-old who may not be able to play effectively for more than 10 minutes a night? Two syllables: De-Clercq. As in Andrew DeClercq, the hardworking but overmatched power forward slotted as the team's starting center. The rest of Orlando's big men? Steven Hunter, the second-year 7-footer expected to be a contributor, is out until January with a torn right knee ligament, and Pat Burke and Olumide Oyedeji are some of the best NBDL players in the NBA. The best interior defender last year was 37-year-old Horace Grant, who almost retired before deciding to play this season.

Last season the Magic finished 25th in the league in boards, and its top rebounder was forward Grant Hill, the guy with the Microsoft ankles (you can never count on them to run properly) who played in only 14 games. That's where the 6' 10" Kemp comes in. He's big, he's talented and, in the East, he could be a viable center—if he can get in shape. He arrived at camp far more husky than Orlando would have liked (the team has since hired him a personal chef, at his request), but he has surprised the coaching staff with his heady play and leadership. After one early practice Kemp told the team, "I've been to the Finals, and we need to work harder." Says Hill, "He's been outspoken, and that's been good. He's a very smart player."

If Kemp rejuvenates his career, his gamble will seem exactly that: smart. Should he fall off the weight wagon again, the numbers on the scale won't be the only ones that fail to add up. —C.B.

JOHN W. MCDONOUGH

TRAFFIC STOPPER Tracy McGrady will continue to draw a crowd, but the return of Hill should unclog a few more lanes.

FAST FACT Since Grant Hill signed with Orlando, the Magic's record in the regular season is 8–10 (.444) with him in the lineup and 79–67 (.541) without.

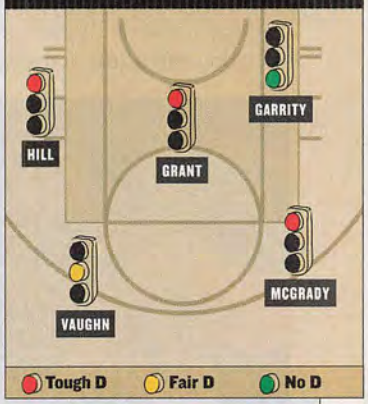
ENEMY LINES an opposing team's scout sizes up the Magic

"This is a feast-or-famine team. If Orlando can keep **Grant Hill** healthy and **Darrell Armstrong** fresh, then it could really make a move, because how many teams have the talent of Hill, Armstrong and **Tracy McGrady**? But if any one of those three is unavailable, the Magic is in trouble. The supporting cast is the team's weakest in three years.... You have to wonder how much they can count on Hill, a high-flying guy who has played only 18 games in the last two seasons because of operations on his left ankle....They want to start **Jacque Vaughn** at the point to take some pressure off Armstrong, who's 34. Every

THEY TALK ABOUT ASKING LESS OF ARMSTRONG, BUT HE'S ONE OF THE BEST HIGH-ENERGY GUYS.

year they talk about asking less of Armstrong, but he's one of the best high-energy guys in the league. As one of the few point guards who picks you up full-court, he sets their tempo and never lets you get comfortable.... I like that **Doc Rivers** lets his guys go out and play. Other coaches are so controlling, but he lets them attack and take quick shots—and Armstrong is crucial to that style....**Pat Garrity** is strictly a perimeter shooter, the pop guy on the pick-and-roll. If you're double-teaming and you have to pick your poison, you'd rather leave **Mike Miller** open, because Garrity is their purest shooter....Orlando is not so good elsewhere. **Shawn Kemp** looked overweight in the preseason, and **Horace Grant** was recovering from arthroscopic surgery on his left knee. Even though Grant's a 37-year-old power forward, he'll probably wind up starting at center. He can still rebound, block shots and score when Armstrong penetrates and dishes....The upside with Hill in the lineup all year could be terrific. He and McGrady are go-to guys who are going to get calls at the end of the game. You need to mix your defensive looks so they can't get comfortable, and when the clock's running down, you don't want to bail them out with a foul."

DEFENSIVE RATINGS



PROJECTED LINEUP

2001–02 record: 44–38 (third in Atlantic)
Points scored: 100.5 (4th) Points allowed: 98.9 (27th)
Coach: Doc Rivers (fourth season with Magic)

STARTERS	PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
PG Grant Hill	62	16.8 ppg	8.9 rpg	4.6 apg	0.57 spg	42.6 FG%
PF Pat Garrity	89	11.1 ppg	4.2 rpg	0.76 spg	42.6 FG%	42.7 3FG%
C Horace Grant	197	8.0 ppg	6.3 rpg	1.4 apg	0.75 spg	51.3 FG%
SG Tracy McGrady	3	25.6 ppg	7.9 rpg	5.3 apg	1.57 spg	45.1 FG%
PG Jacque Vaughn	167	6.6 ppg	2.0 rpg	4.3 apg	0.79 spg	47.0 FG%
BENCH	**PVR***	**2001–02 KEY STATS**				
G-F Mike Miller	53	15.2 ppg	4.3 rpg	3.1 apg	43.8 FG%	38.3 3FG%
G Darrell Armstrong	127	12.4 ppg	3.9 rpg	5.5 apg	1.91 spg	41.9 FG%
F Shawn Kemp	146	6.1 ppg	3.8 rpg	0.7 apg	0.57 spg	43.0 FG%
F Ryan Humphrey (R)	258	18.9 ppg	10.9 rpg	2.6 apg	2.81 bpg	48.9 FG%
C Andrew DeClercq	266	2.7 ppg	2.7 rpg	0.4 apg	0.39 bpg	45.0 FG%

New acquisition (R) Rookie (statistics for final college season) *PVR: Player Value Ranking (explanation on page 92)

11

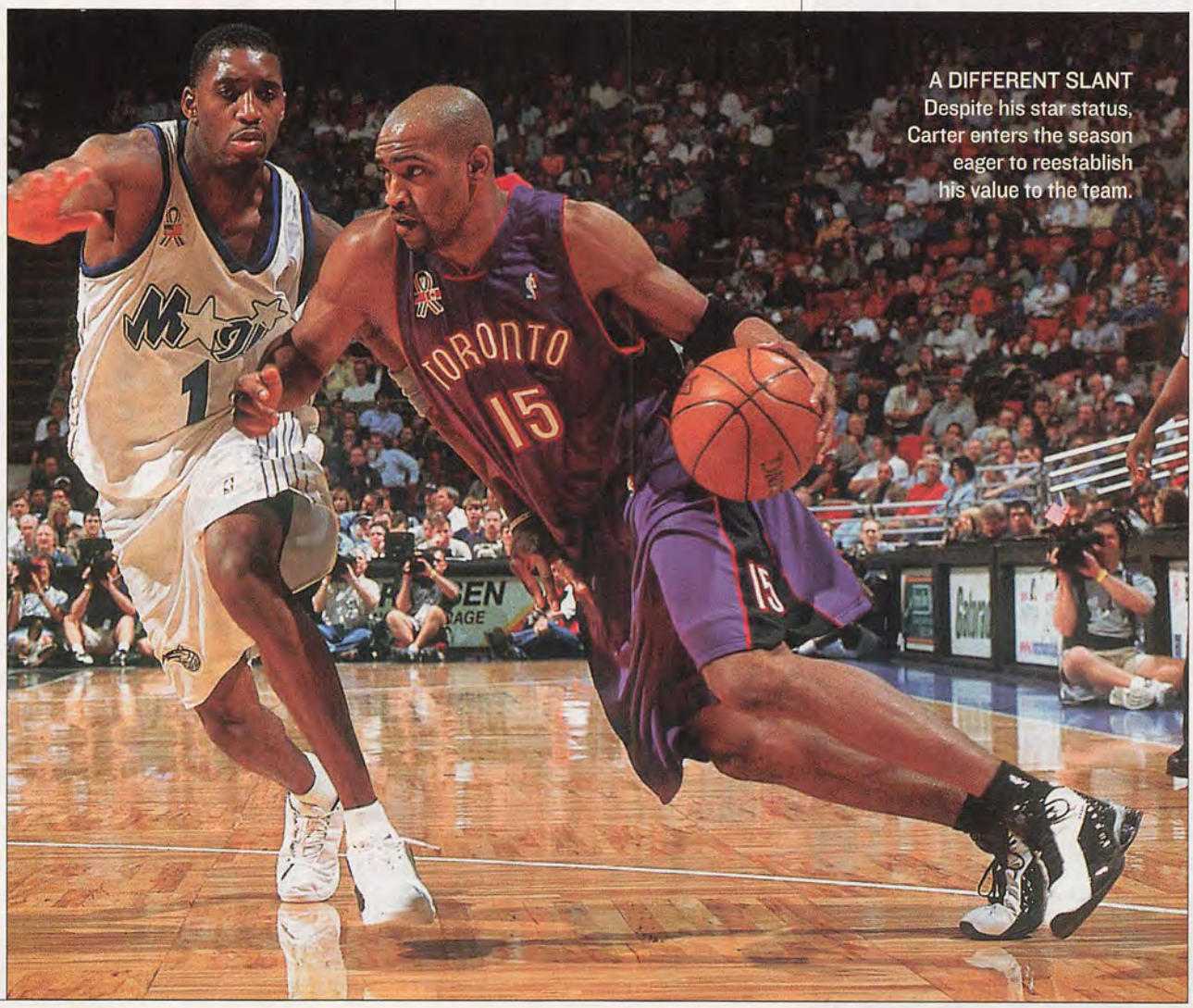
TORONTO RAPTORS

When Vince Carter went down last season, Toronto's fortunes went up. Now he's healthy—and he'll take the fall if this team fails

THE RAPTORS opened their training camp in Waterloo, Ont., but it may as well have been Elba. A somnolent town halfway between Toronto and Buffalo, Waterloo offers little in the way of diversions like nightlife. Following two-a-day practices at the municipal gym, the players retreated to their austere quarters at the Waterloo Inn and. . . . "Uh, there's gonna be a lot of roaming charges on the cell bill," predicted swingman Morris (Mo Pete) Peterson. "Coach decided to get all boot camp on us this year."

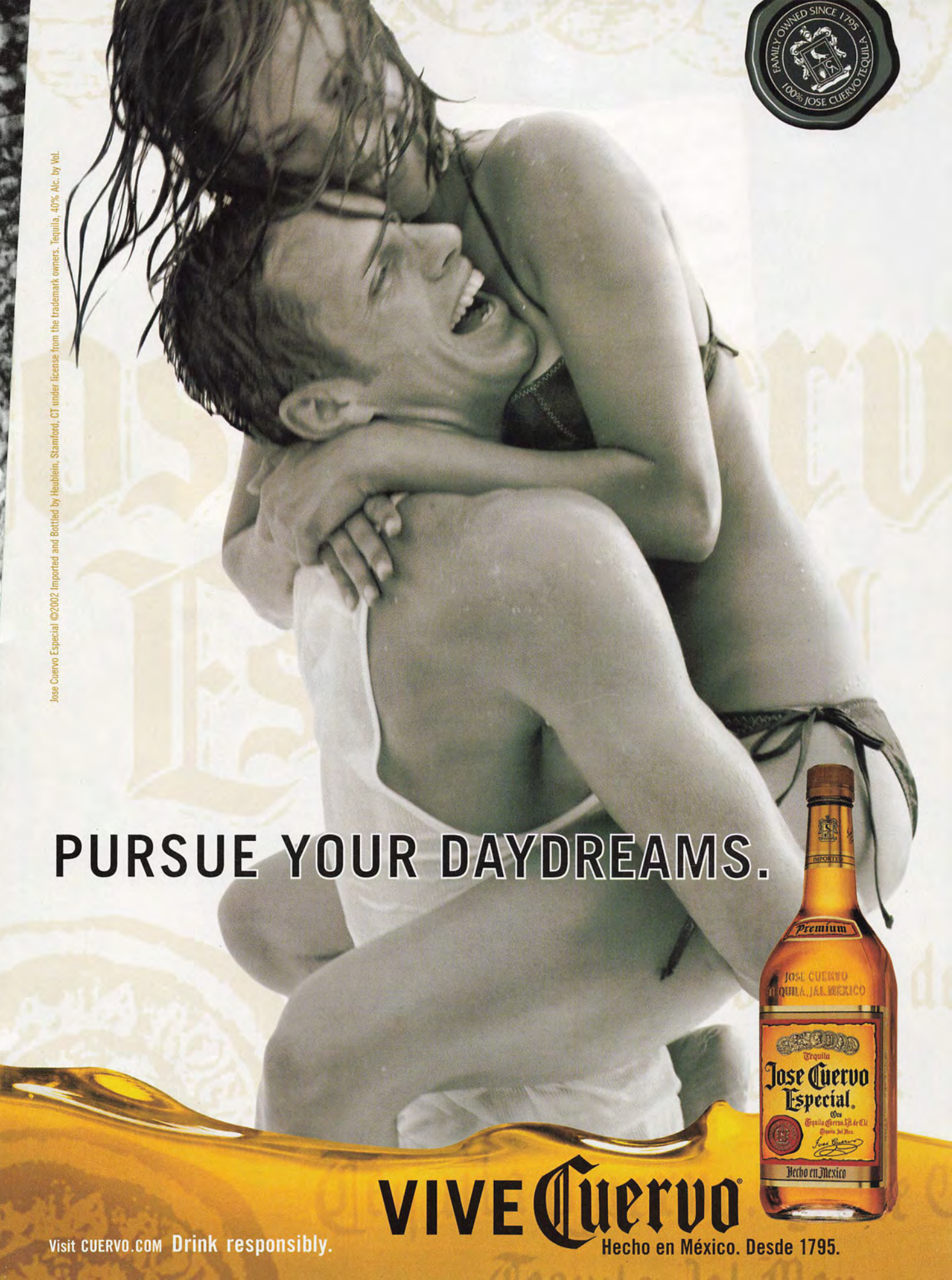
Lenny Wilkens has never stood accused of being an intense taskmaster, but tough love may be precisely what his enigmatic, phlegmatic team needs. Picked by many to reach the Finals last season, Vince Carter hobbled through many games, and on March 22, with the team seven games under .500, he shut it down for the season, then underwent arthroscopic surgery on his left knee. The Raptors regrouped, winning 12 of their final 14 games to make the playoffs before falling to the Pistons. "It showed that basketball is still a team sport," says general manager Glen Grunwald. "Plus it showed that we have some good players besides Vince."

A cynic might say that Carter's value to the team is questionable, but, to a man, the players have a more charitable spin. "We took away a lot of confidence from



A DIFFERENT SLANT
Despite his star status, Carter enters the season eager to reestablish his value to the team.

BILL FRAKES



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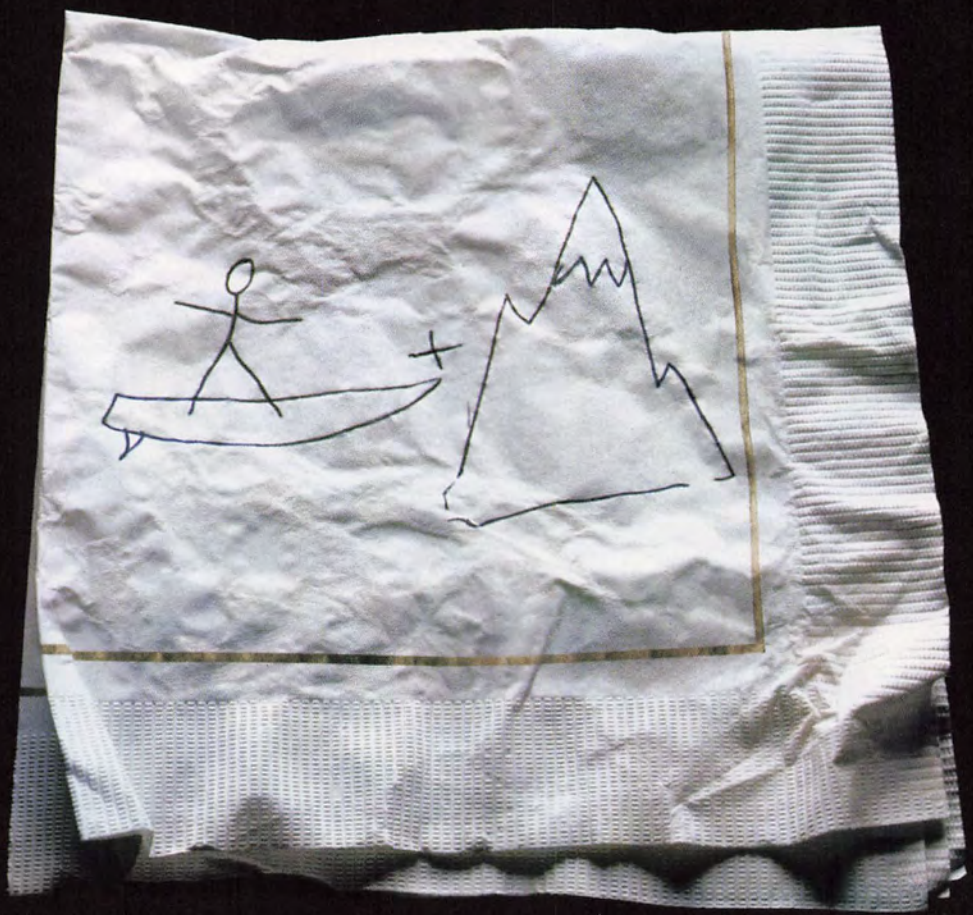

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GARRETT W. ELLWOOD

MO' BETTER After soaring in Carter's absence, third-year man Peterson has earned a starting spot at small forward.

the end of last season," says center Antonio Davis. "Now we're thinking, If we continue to play hard, imagine how good we can be with Vince. The sky's the limit, man."

One player crucial to these great expectations is the 25-year-old Peterson, who flourished in Carter's absence. Over the summer Wilkens informed Peterson that he would be spending most of his time on the blocks at small forward. Forewarned, Peterson forearmed himself, adding seven pounds of muscle to his 6' 7" frame as well as some low-post moves. "I don't want to give away too much," he says, "but think spin move."

His 42-inch vertical leap notwithstanding, the other Raptor being asked to elevate his game is Carter. Notoriously sensitive to criticism, he is well aware that he has slipped a few notches on the Next-Jordan-o-Meter and that a growing legion of fans and peers questions his desire. He came to camp talking tough, promising to exact revenge on opposing players who took advantage of his gimpy knee and vowing that the nights "when I don't come to play" are over. "Now," he says, "I'm turning it up from the jump ball and turning it off when I'm in the ice bath." —L.J.W.

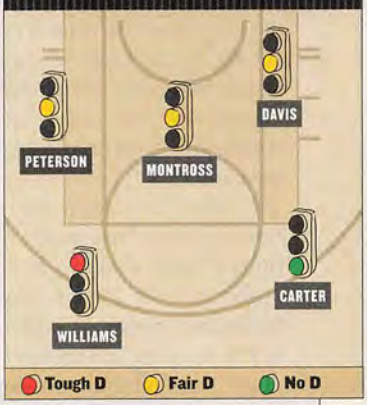
FAST FACT Before the '01–02 Raptors, only the 1976–77 Bulls and the '96–97 Suns had made the playoffs after losing 12 or more games in a row.

ENEMY LINES an opposing team's scout sizes up the Raptors

"**Vince Carter** doesn't have to score 30 to prove that he's back, because everyone knows he can do that. What's going to define Carter in a positive way is if he works to play defense and deny every pass, improve his shot selection, dive for the loose ball, fight for the offensive rebound—and do all the things that will lead his team to win games. Your best player has to be your leader, but I don't think Carter has it in him to do those things....We try to play Carter physically, give him a little pop every time we can, and he shies away from it. That's why you see him taking a turnaround, fallaway 20-footer when he could pump fake and drive into the lane....Carter is their only guy who causes matchup problems. Their bench is weaker than last year, and it's thinnest at his position....To win, they're going to have to run for easy transition baskets, and that's **Mo Peterson**'s strength: He'll get three or four layups a game by outhustling you downcourt. Peterson has range out to 22 feet, but he likes to set his feet and measure the shot, so you make him put the ball on the floor and shoot off the dribble.... If **Hakeem Olajuwon** retires as expected, **Antonio Davis** is the best at creating his own shot among their big men, and that's a problem. He doesn't have the greatest hands. If you can get on Davis early, he will lose confidence in his shot, and it can affect him for the rest of the game....**Lamond Murray** has a reputation for being a cancer, but they need his scoring. Until they traded for him in September they had only 75 points per game based on last year's production....**Alvin Williams** looks healthier and stronger after being bothered by a leg injury during the final quarter of last season. He isn't the prototypical point guard, but he has a lot of confidence. He's the type who will miss five in a row then make the shot to win the game."

WE PLAY CARTER PHYSICALLY, GIVE HIM A POP EVERY TIME WE CAN; HE SHIES AWAY FROM IT.

DEFENSIVE RATINGS



PROJECTED LINEUP

2001–02 record: 42–40 (tied for third in Central)
Points scored: 91.4 (25th) Points allowed: 91.8 (4th)
Coach: Lenny Wilkens (third season with Raptors)

STARTERS		PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
SF	Morris Peterson	83	14.0 ppg	3.5 rpg	2.4 apg	1.16 spg	43.8 FG%
PF	Antonio Davis	40	14.5 ppg	9.6 rpg	2.0 apg	1.08 bpg	42.6 FG%
C	Eric Montross	244	2.4 ppg	2.9 rpg	0.3 apg	0.47 bpg	40.2 FG%
SG	Vince Carter	9	24.7 ppg	5.2 rpg	4.0 apg	1.57 spg	42.8 FG%
PG	Alvin Williams	92	11.8 ppg	3.4 rpg	5.7 apg	1.65 spg	41.5 FG%
BENCH		**PVR***	**2001–02 KEY STATS**				
F	Lamond Murray	117	16.6 ppg	5.2 rpg	0.99 spg	43.6 FG%	42.4 3FG%
F	Jerome Williams	198	7.6 ppg	5.7 rpg	1.1 apg	1.15 spg	49.0 FG%
G	Lindsey Hunter	217	5.8 ppg	1.6 apg	.80 spg	38.2 FG%	38.0 3FG%
C	Nate Huffman (R)	316	18.8 ppg	7.5 rpg	1.6 apg	61.2 FG%	39.1 3FG%
F	Michael Bradley	327	1.2 ppg	0.9 rpg	0.1 apg	52.0 FG%	50.0 FT%

New acquisition (R) Rookie (statistics for Israeli League) *PVR: Player Value Ranking (explanation on page 92)

12

MIAMI HEAT

How the mighty have fallen: Pat Riley is forced to turn to a rookie—Caron Butler of UConn—to lead his team

MAYBE CARON BUTLER missed the memo about the whole wide-eyed, two-left-feet rookie thing. The 10th pick in the draft after two seasons at Connecticut, Butler was expected to come into the league bumbling and stumbling, carrying the veterans' duffel bags to the bus and looking good only in layup lines and team photos.

So when, in a recent Heat scrimmage, Butler took the ball to the rim with authority again and again, at one point dunking over 7-foot center Ernest Brown as if he were a cardboard cutout, it was hard not to wonder if this kid might be more than he's cracked up to be. "We really like him," says Heat coach Pat Riley, a man not given to playing, much less complimenting, first-year players. "He's got great force in his game, and he's got enough guts to keep taking it at you."

As the first lottery pick of Riley's 20-year coaching career, Butler is both the team's star of the future and its potential star of the present, a sign of how far the Heat have fallen. With Alonzo Mourning out for the year with a kidney ailment, a pair of point guards who can't shoot straight and little scoring punch outside of swingman Eddie Jones, this is a team that even Riley can't get into the playoffs.

That's why the Heat's focus will be on the development of Butler. At 6' 7" and 235 pounds, he reminds many of Celtics star Paul Pierce with his versatility, ability to score and professionalism (not to mention his larcenously low position in the draft; in 1998, Pierce also fell to 10th). The day after he was chosen by the Heat, Butler flew to Miami and hasn't left since, living in a hotel for a month before buying a house. He immediately hired a financial adviser and two lawyers and solicited advice from an aunt who's an accountant, all so he can "keep my mind on basketball and not on anybody robbing me."

He's even mastered the NBA media monotone, spewing out platitudes, clichés and all the right reverential endorsements. (On meeting his coach: "I was, like, It's the legendary coach Riley!")

His biggest tests so far have been surviving training camp—"there's no way to prepare for your first Pat Riley camp," says guard Eddie House with a smile—and picking up the intricacies of the NBA game. "He's a quick learner, but he's also a quick regressive learner," say Riley. "It's, 'Oh yeah, Coach, I got it,' then the same thing happens the next day."

Butler is joined in the Heat's youth movement by another Butler, Rasual, a 6' 7", 205-pound rookie forward out of La Salle who has been the biggest surprise of the preseason. Long and athletic, with refined offensive skills and daddy-longlegs defensive potential, the less-heralded Butler will also see plenty of minutes.

For now Riley must hope a rookie will lead the Heat. If Caron Butler can't do it, then Miami will be right back to the lottery. —C.B.

QUICK STUDY Whether it's mouthing platitudes or attacking the rim, Caron Butler doesn't act like a first-year player.

JOE MURPHY/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES

FAST FACT Top pick Caron Butler needs to rack up more than 13.4 points per game to become coach Pat Riley's most prolific rookie scorer.

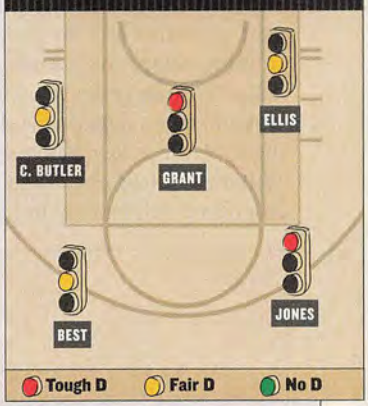
ENEMY LINES an opposing team's scout sizes up the Heat

"Opponents should be able to win most of their matchups against these guys, who are going to have more trouble scoring than ever. I wouldn't be surprised if they have a game in the 50s....With **Alonzo Mourning** out, **Brian Grant** is their only capable center, but he's more effective at power forward. Grant's not going to score much over centers inside, so he'll move out for the midrange jumper—and that means he won't be getting to the line as much....**Eddie Jones** is Miami's most talented player, but they're not going to give him the ball and get out of the way. Jones is a straight-line driver. He's effective when you

THEY WOULD BE BETTER OFF RUNNING, BUT RILEY WILL WANT TO BUILD FROM THE DEFENSIVE END.

run out to get him, and he catches you leaning....**Travis Best** has to be more offensive-minded, and on defense he must keep his man out of the middle. He's the only point guard they can count on, so they'd better hope he holds up over the course of the season....**Caron Butler** is going to be a good NBA player. He's a strong rebounder who's more mature and tougher than most rookies....Put it all together and it looks as if the Heat would be better off trying to run, but if **Pat Riley** does give them some freedom, it will be a gradual process. He'll want to build from the defensive end first. A lot will depend on what happens early in the season: If they start pushing the ball a little and Best makes bad decisions, then Riley will have to slow it down again. He can't let them keep making mistakes, because they don't have the firepower to make up a double-digit deficit. He'd rather have them try to hang close and hope they can execute down the stretch....Next summer they'll end up with another lottery pick and the cap room from Mourning's expired contract to pursue a top free agent. You'd think that after going through this hard year, Riley would stick around next season to enjoy better times, but who knows?"

DEFENSIVE RATINGS



PROJECTED LINEUP

2001–02 record: 36–46 (sixth in Atlantic)
Points scored: 87.2 (29th) Points allowed: 88.7 (1st)
Coach: Pat Riley (eighth season with Heat)

STARTERS		PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
SF	Caron Butler (R)	70	20.3 ppg	7.5 rpg	3.0 apg	2.12 spg	48.6 FG%
PF	LaPhonso Ellis	161	7.1 ppg	4.3 rpg	0.56 bpg	41.8 FG%	30.6 3FG%
C	Brian Grant	85	9.3 ppg	8.0 rpg	1.9 apg	0.67 spg	46.9 FG%
SG	Eddie Jones	41	18.3 ppg	4.7 rpg	3.2 apg	1.44 spg	43.2 FG%
PG	Travis Best	115	7.9 ppg	4.4 apg	1.20 spg	44.0 FG%	35.6 3FG%

BENCH		PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
C	Vladimir Stepania	204	4.3 ppg	4.0 rpg	0.66 bpg	47.0 FG%	48.1 FT%
G	Eddie House	231	8.0 ppg	1.7 rpg	1.9 apg	0.64 spg	39.9 FG%
F	Rasual Butler (R)	234	20.9 ppg	8.8 rpg	1.34 bpg	1.28 spg	43.4 FG%
G	Anthony Carter	263	4.3 ppg	2.5 rpg	4.7 apg	1.09 spg	34.2 FG%
F	Malik Allen	283	4.3 ppg	3.2 rpg	0.67 bpg	43.1 FG%	80.0 FT%

New acquisition (R) Rookie (statistics for final college season) *PVR: Player Value Ranking (explanation on page 92)

13

CHICAGO BULLS

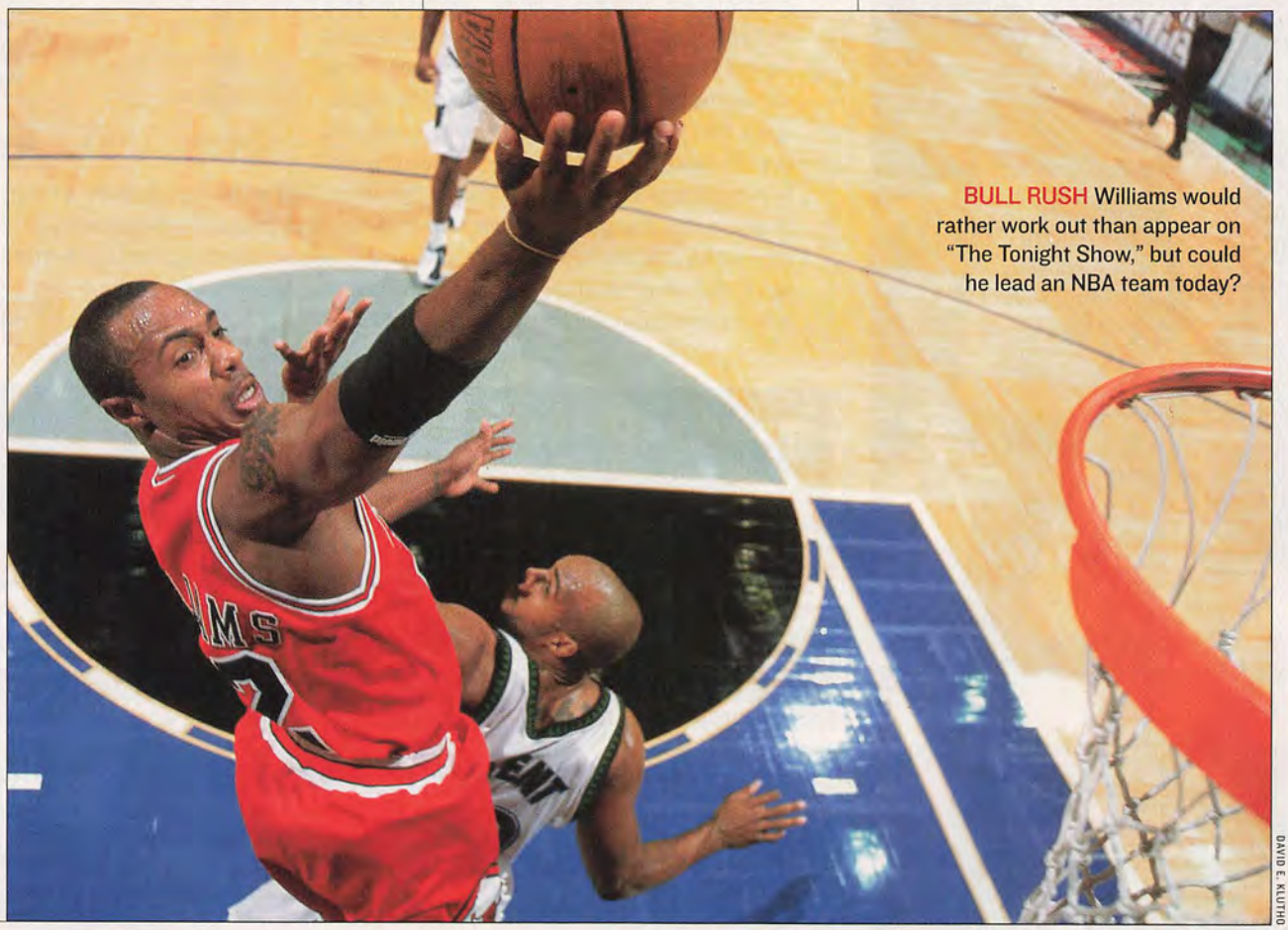
Youth will be served in the Windy City, where a rookie takes charge of a club on which half the players are under 24

ROOKIE POINT GUARD Jay Williams was in uniform, miked and ready to go. The camera crew was set, the cue card poised. It was the opening day of training camp, and a Bulls staffer had asked Williams, the No. 2 pick out of Duke, to tape a public service announcement. After a few botched attempts, Williams bolted out of his chair. "My stomach is killing me," he said, unclipping his mike. "I'll be right back." Minutes later Williams jogged back into the Berto Center gym with a sheepish grin. "Sorry," he said. "Bad pizza."

Chicago fans can only hope Williams's debut wasn't an omen. After four nauseating seasons the Bulls are counting on the 6' 2" Williams and his deep dishes to help turn this once-proud franchise around. "I feel good about this team," says coach Bill Cartwright, who went 17–38 after taking over for Tim Floyd in midseason. "We've got more guys who can play."

That's not to say that Cartwright will like everything he sees as he watches a defense that yielded a league-worst 46.5% shooting last season. There are also questions about whether Williams and swingman Jalen Rose can coexist as primary ball handlers, and at least a half-dozen players under 24 years old should make the roster. All this could spell chaos, but that's where an orchestrator like Williams comes in. Though only 21 he has maturity to go with explosiveness and acute court vision. In July he declined an invitation to appear on *The Tonight Show* because he didn't want to miss the first day of voluntary workouts before summer league. He was also the first to call Donyell Marshall after the veteran forward signed a three-year, $13.5 million deal with Chicago. "If I want the ball in my hands at the end of a game," Williams says, "I've got to have the trust of my teammates."

Cartwright envisions Williams as a



BULL RUSH Williams would rather work out than appear on "The Tonight Show," but could he lead an NBA team today?

DAVID E. KLUTHO

ANSWER 01

Rbk

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GARRETT W. ELLWOOD/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES

FLOWER POWER Much of the leadership will fall to the 29-year-old Rose, Chicago's lone veteran starter.

penetrator on offense and a full-court pest on D. The taller and slightly more experienced Jamal Crawford is likely to start at the point at first, but Williams, whose image already adorns billboards and print ads in the Windy City, clearly will log heavy minutes. His biggest adjustment will be learning game tempo and pick-and-roll defense, two areas in which he struggled during the summer league. He also must find ways to use his drive-and-dish skills within the Bulls' triangle offense. He picked up a few pointers while backing up Baron Davis and Andre Miller on the U.S. team at the world championships over the summer. "I watched the way [Baron] controls his body and uses it to make contact," Williams says. "Andre makes it look so simple, yet he's crafty."

The Bulls say they aren't counting on big numbers right away from Williams. What they need is his intelligence (he was captain of his high school chess team), his drive (he was first in wind sprints at training camp) and his winning touch (Duke was 95–13 in his three seasons). "He's gonna have nights where he looks like a world beater and nights he's gonna look like he still needs to be at Duke," says Rose, Chicago's leading scorer last season. "That's when I've got to be there to put an arm around him and tell him it's gonna be all right." —*Marty Burns*

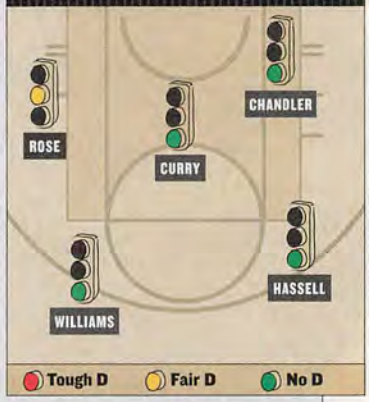
FAST FACT Marcus Fizer's 427 boards were the lowest team-leading total since rebounds became an official statistic in 1950–51.

ENEMY LINES an opposing team's scout sizes up the Bulls

"They've got three young, talented guys, which means they should be good someday. But not now. They brought **Tyson Chandler**, **Eddy Curry**, **Jay Williams** and **Trenton Hassell** to the Utah summer league, and they didn't even win there.... Their go-to guy is **Jalen Rose**, but I've never viewed him as a leader. That role would have gone to Elton Brand if they hadn't traded him for Chandler.... Williams is going to put up stats, but he's going to realize quickly that a point guard is judged by victories. He's going to struggle for a year with the triangle because he wants to beat his man one-on-one off the dribble. Phil Jackson and Tex Winter are still trying to get Kobe to be more patient in that offense. If Kobe is still working at it, how long will it take Williams?... The triangle takes time because you're not just calling a play and ordering everybody to run to spots. In the triangle your players need to read each other and know how to make the backcourt cut or flash to the open spot when a teammate is being overplayed. What has made it click for Jackson is that when the shot clock's down, he's always had Michael or Kobe or Shaq to bail him out. Who is Chicago going to in those situations?... I like hearing **Bill Cartwright** say they're going to play defense. The problem is that Curry and Chandler each averaged a foul every seven or eight minutes, so it's going to be hard to keep them on the court. Those two are going to be stars, and I think you'll start seeing big improvement this year. They're both shot blockers, which is a terrific thing to have.... As a fellow shot blocker **Donyell Marshall** looks like a good fit with the youngsters, but if they're in foul trouble he's not the kind of guy to carry them.... Cartwright is a young coach, and I wish he had more experience on his staff. **Bill Berry** is the only assistant who's been around a long time."

MARSHALL IS A GOOD FIT, BUT IF THEY'RE IN FOUL TROUBLE HE'S NOT A GUY TO CARRY THEM.

DEFENSIVE RATINGS



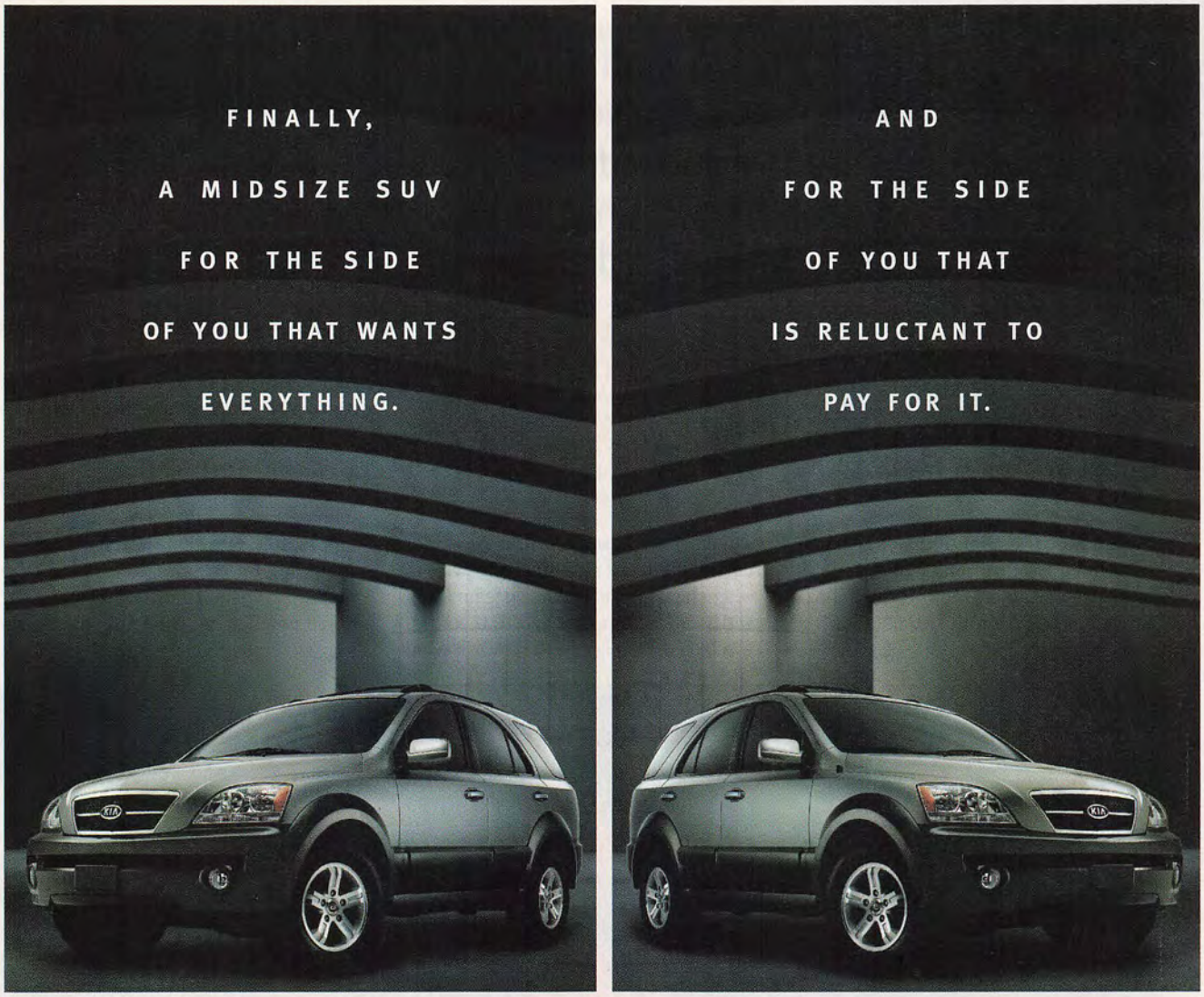
PROJECTED LINEUP

2001–02 record: 21–61 (eighth in Central)
Points scored: 89.5 (28th) Points allowed: 98.0 (23rd)
Coach: Bill Cartwright (second season with Bulls)

STARTERS	PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
SF **Jalen Rose**	32	20.4 ppg	4.5 rpg	4.3 apg	0.94 spg	45.5 FG%
PF **Tyson Chandler**	145	6.1 ppg	4.8 rpg	0.8 apg	1.31 bpg	49.7 FG%
C **Eddy Curry**	148	6.7 ppg	3.8 rpg	0.3 apg	0.74 bpg	50.1 FG%
SG **Trenton Hassell**	170	8.7 ppg	3.3 rpg	2.2 apg	42.5 FG%	36.4 3FG%
PG **Jay Williams (R)**	72	21.3 ppg	3.5 rpg	5.3 apg	2.17 spg	45.7 FG%

BENCH	PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
F **Donyell Marshall**	113	14.8 ppg	7.6 rpg	1.7 apg	1.16 bpg	51.9 FG%
F **Eddie Robinson**	152	9.0 ppg	2.7 rpg	1.3 apg	0.79 spg	45.3 FG%
G **Jamal Crawford**	175	9.3 ppg	1.5 rpg	2.4 apg	0.78 spg	47.6 FG%
F **Marcus Fizer**	208	12.3 ppg	5.6 rpg	1.6 apg	0.64 spg	43.8 FG%
G **Fred Hoiberg**	256	4.4 ppg	2.7 rpg	1.7 apg	0.77 spg	41.6 FG%

New acquisition (R) Rookie (statistics for final college season) *PVR: Player Value Ranking (explanation on page 92)



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14

With the addition of Antonio McDyess, the season looked shaky at best; with his loss, it looms as a disaster

NEW YORK KNICKS

THEY STOOD about 40 feet apart on that first day of training camp, a study in contrasts. On one end of the floor, a towel draped around his neck and a smile creasing his face, the future of the Knicks franchise, Antonio McDyess, talked about his new life in New York, where he hoped to become a team leader and average 20 points and 10 rebounds.

A long outlet pass away, near half-court, Knicks G.M. Scott Layden stood with his arms folded like a bouncer, his visage a grim picture of disappointment. As a pack of New York writers circled around him, he repeatedly said that he had no comment about his All-Star small forward, Latrell Sprewell, who had arrived at camp that morning with a broken right hand.

In the figurative and literal middle ground between this good news–bad news combo stood coach Don Chaney, who was engaged in some serious cognitive dissonance. After praising the acquisition of McDyess and calling him "my dream player," Chaney attempted to rationalize the loss of Sprewell. "I've been in discouraging situations before," he said. "I've learned to master seeing the positive side."

A month later Chaney must be needing something akin to the Hubble Telescope to keep those positives in sight. The Spree situation has gone from discouraging to disastrous; after fining him

BREAKING POINT The sooner Sprewell's hand mends, the better the Knicks' chances of avoiding a slow start.

JOHN W. MCDONOUGH

JOHN W. MCDONOUGH

KEEP IT COMING The Knicks will need the career-best scoring Houston gave them last year—and then some.

$250,000 and banishing him from the team—a punishment that Sprewell has appealed—New York on Monday suspended him for failing to rehab his injury, which will cost him $140,000 more. What's more, on Oct. 12, McDyess fractured his left kneecap while following up a missed shot in a preseason game. In one crumpled landing, the Knicks saw their lone bright spot to date (McDyess was averaging 17.7 points and 13.0 rebounds in preseason) reduced to a frustrated spectator expected to miss all of the season.

The loss of McDyess is compounded by the fact that the team bet the house to acquire him. In dire need of a center and a point guard, New York sent guard Mark Jackson, forward Marcus Camby and the No. 7 pick (Nene Hilaro of Brazil) to the Nuggets for McDyess.

What's left now? An array of mismatched castoffs that Jeff Van Gundy might have been able to goad into respectability, but not a squad that can handle the offensive-minded, run-run-run style Chaney was hoping to institute.

With no offense and a suspect defense, is there a chance the Knicks can avoid the lottery? A betting man would have to answer: No Dice. —C.B.

FAST FACT Last season Allan Houston (20.4 points per game) became the first Knicks guard to average 20 since Ray Williams (20.9) in 1979–80.

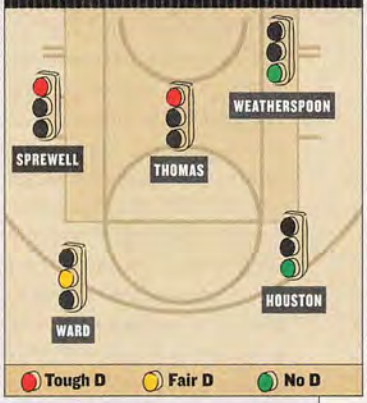
ENEMY LINES an opposing team's scout sizes up the Knicks

"The only thing keeping the Knicks from being the worst team in the East is their experience. The starters are all veterans, and **Allan Houston**, **Latrell Sprewell** and **Kurt Thomas** are capable of going for 25 on a given night. . . . Sprewell isn't as consistent a finisher or shooter as he used to be—in part because the team around him isn't what it used to be. If he were a more reliable person, he could get traded to a contender and make a big difference. But I emphasize the if. . . . Houston and Sprewell are no longer among the top five shooting guards in the East. Houston's game has deteriorated since he

ASKING WEATHERSPOON TO START AS AN UNDERSIZED POWER FORWARD IS ASKING FOR TROUBLE.

signed his big contract in 2001. He's less athletic, he can't create his own shot and even when he comes off screens, it's not as easy for him as it used to be. It hurts, too, that he hasn't had a point guard who can draw the defense and kick it out to him. . . . Losing **Antonio McDyess** for the season was a huge blow, though I had questions about his health after watching him limp through his first attempted comeback last year. . . . Thomas is a great defender, but he's closer to 6′ 8″ than his listed 6′ 9″, which means he has a hard time guarding most centers, especially the 7-footers who know how to score. . . . **Clarence Weatherspoon** would be fine as your third big guy coming off the bench, but asking him to start as an undersized power forward is asking for trouble. . . . **Charlie Ward**'s shooting has declined, and **Howard Eisley** doesn't do anything at a high level. He and Shandon Anderson are two average guys who benefited from playing in the Utah system with two Hall of Famers. . . . Even if the Knicks get off to a good start, I still see them finishing in the lottery. Until Sprewell comes back, they're going to be starting Houston and four substitutes who are making starter's money."

DEFENSIVE RATINGS



PROJECTED LINEUP

2001–02 record: 30–52 (seventh in Atlantic)
Points scored: 91.6 (24th) Points allowed: 95.6 (14th)
Coach: Don Chaney (second season with Knicks)

STARTERS	PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
SF Latrell Sprewell	68	19.4 ppg	3.7 rpg	3.9 apg	1.16 spg	40.4 FG%
PF Clarence Weatherspoon	168	8.8 ppg	8.2 rpg	0.86 bpg	0.66 spg	41.8 FG%
C Kurt Thomas	47	13.9 ppg	9.1 rpg	1.1 apg	0.96 bpg	49.4 FG%
SG Allan Houston	52	20.4 ppg	3.3 rpg	2.5 apg	43.7 FG%	39.3 3FG%
PG Charlie Ward	171	5.2 ppg	3.2 apg	1.08 spg	37.3 FG%	32.3 3FG%
BENCH	**PVR***	**2001–02 KEY STATS**				
G-F Shandon Anderson	182	5.0 ppg	3.0 rpg	0.9 apg	39.9 FG%	27.7 3FG%
G Howard Eisley	214	4.4 ppg	1.3 rpg	2.6 apg	0.62 spg	33.7 FG%
F Othella Harrington	265	7.7 ppg	4.5 rpg	0.47 bpg	0.39 spg	52.7 FG%
G Frank Williams (R)	279	16.2 ppg	4.7 rpg	4.4 apg	39.3 FG%	34.0 3FG%
C Michael Doleac	322	4.6 ppg	4.0 rpg	0.6 apg	0.26 bpg	41.7 FG%

New acquisition (R) Rookie (statistics for final college season) *PVR: Player Value Ranking (explanation on page 92)

15

An off-season makeover brought in a potential breakout player, but playoff contention remains Miles away

CLEVELAND CAVALIERS

DARIUS MILES'S summer sounds like the treatment for the basketball version of *Major League*. One day he's a hip, exciting player on a hip, exciting team who lives near the beach and, in between games, plays cameos in Hollywood flicks. The next day he gets a call that he's been traded from the Clippers to the basketball necropolis that is Cleveland.

But if Miles is supposed to be despondent, he's departing from the script. "I'm liking it here," he says. "It reminds me of the Clippers when I first got there." If his delivery is not completely convincing, the sentiment is at least admirable. The woebegone Cavs haven't won a playoff series in a decade, draw some of the league's sparsest crowds (average attendance: 14,539) and in the off-season unloaded their top three scorers—Wes Person, Lamond Murray and Andre Miller, who also led the league in assists. The company line is that the team is trying to go with a more athletic look and that Miller, for all his savvy playmaking, didn't fit the bill.

Still, the summer retrenchment left many scratching their heads. Before being dealt to the Raptors at his request, Murray wrote a letter to the editor of local newspapers—not your average method of protest for an NBA player—calling the Cavaliers "a house on no foundation." He also theorized to the Cleveland *Plain Dealer* that the team is throwing the '02–03 season in hopes of landing Ohio high school senior LeBron James in the lottery next June. (Cavs coach John Lucas was suspended for two games last spring after conducting an unauthorized workout with James.)

Whereas Person and Murray were unloaded for spare parts (Person to the Grizzlies for since-waived swingman Nick Anderson; Murray for center Michael Stewart and a draft pick), at least the Cavs got Miles for Miller. Miles still has rough edges, but he turned 21 just this month and his upside is tremendous. He has the athleticism to play every position except center—in early practices he brought the ball upcourt—and his shooting should be less erratic after a summer regimen of 1,000 jumpers a day. "The third year has been a breakout year for a lot of guys," Miles says. "I want to have one too."

The play of Miles, 6' 7" slasher Ricky Davis and rookie guard Dajuan Wagner, the No. 6 pick out of Memphis, promises to be both exceptional and, at times, exceptionally bad. All are quick, open-court players; none are older than 23. "They're good marketingwise, but they're not good basketball players yet," says Lucas. "I do like their youth and energy."

If nothing else, the kiddie corps is in good hands with Lucas, a patient teacher and serial optimist. Lucas doesn't see the glass as half full; he sees it as overflowing—with Cristal. To hear him tell it, center Zydrunas Ilgauskas could "score 20 points a night" and Miles "could be a Jordan-type player." Yet even he is Lukewarm on the upcoming season. "We have a chance to be good down the road," he says. "You just hope management is patient." —L.J.W.

HOT AIR Miles brings tremendous versatility and potential, but Lucas's comparisons to Jordan are premature.

NATHANIEL S. BUTLER/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES

FAST FACT The Cavaliers haven't deployed the same opening day lineup for two consecutive seasons since 1977–78 and '78–79.

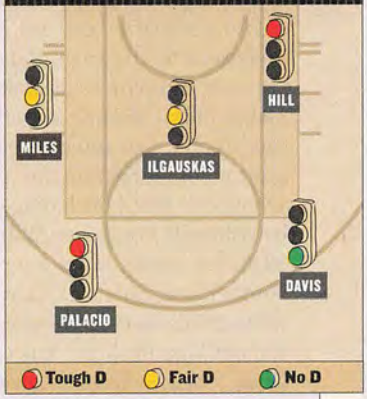
ENEMY LINES an opposing team's scout sizes up the Cavaliers

"They have big trouble at point guard. I don't love Andre Miller as much as some people do, but he's one of the best. You pair him with **Zydrunas Ilgauskas** and you've got a strong combination that shouldn't have been broken up. They ought to make Ilgauskas the focal point and feed him until he drops from exhaustion....There's been talk of trying **Darius Miles** at the point, but he doesn't have the right frame of mind. Name the last player who successfully switched to point guard from another position....Miles looks a lot more powerful this year. He was always wiry strong anyway, going up for

THERE'S BEEN TALK OF TRYING MILES AT THE POINT, BUT HE DOESN'T HAVE THE FRAME OF MIND.

rebounds in a crowd or shedding guys when he drove the lane....Miles is the go-to guy here, and that might be a shame. It wasn't that way with the Clippers; he knew he could be yanked if he didn't do the right things. Now that he's being expected to score, he might get distracted from developing the little parts of his game that would make him a complete player and a superstar....There's a ton of talent on this team, but it's really raw. **Jumaine Jones** is their only player who made more than 13 threes last year. It's going to put a lot of pressure on **John Lucas**, who I think is a great coach....Is **Ricky Davis** worthy of the mid-level exception [$4.5 million]? I don't think he's proved he is after just a half-season's work last year....If Ilgauskas goes down, **DeSagana Diop** is years away from being ready, if ever. It doesn't make sense that Diop was the No. 8 pick in 2001 and **Carlos Boozer** was No. 35 last June. Boozer is so much better. He can knock down a jump shot, and he's strong enough to eventually become a low-post scorer....The Cavs are only at home once in their first six games, and that's against the Lakers. They could start 0–6, which would be a killer for a young team like this."

DEFENSIVE RATINGS



PROJECTED LINEUP

2001–02 record: 29–53 (seventh in Central)
Points scored: 95.3 (16th) Points allowed: 98.6 (26th)
Coach: John Lucas (second season with Cavaliers)

STARTERS		PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
SF	Darius Miles	39	9.5 ppg	5.5 rpg	2.2 apg	1.26 bpg	48.1 FG%
PF	Tyrone Hill	173	8.0 ppg	10.5 rpg	0.9 apg	0.50 bpg	39.0 FG%
C	Zydrunas Ilgauskas	95	11.1 ppg	5.4 rpg	1.1 apg	1.35 bpg	42.5 FG%
SG	Ricky Davis	107	11.7 ppg	3.0 rpg	2.2 apg	0.84 spg	48.1 FG%
PG	Milt Palacio	205	3.3 ppg	1.1 rpg	1.2 apg	0.43 spg	38.3 FG%

BENCH		PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
G	Dajuan Wagner (R)	121	21.2 ppg	2.5 rpg	3.6 apg	1.19 spg	41.0 FG%
F	Carlos Boozer (R)	147	18.2 ppg	8.7 rpg	1.1 apg	0.89 spg	66.5 FG%
F	Jumaine Jones	184	8.3 ppg	6.0 rpg	0.93 spg	44.8 FG%	31.0 3FG%
C	Chris Mihm	239	7.7 ppg	5.3 rpg	0.3 apg	1.20 bpg	42.0 FG%
G	Bimbo Coles	267	3.2 ppg	1.2 rpg	2.3 apg	38.4 FG%	20.0 3FG%

New acquisition (R) Rookie (statistics for final college season) *PVR: Player Value Ranking (explanation on page 92)

1

They've done fine without Chris Webber, and they can make do without Mike Bibby—at least until they get another shot at the world champs

SACRAMENTO KINGS

HAD THE broken right foot that will keep point guard Mike Bibby out of action until at least December occurred last season, it would've been bad, but not horrible, news for the Kings. But this year, in the wake of Bibby's star-making performance in last season's playoffs, it seems catastrophic. One could argue that, right now, no other Sacramento player is as valuable as Bibby, including Chris Webber. After all, last season Webber missed 28 games, yet the Kings were 19–9 without their star forward. "Hey, we played without Chris last year, so we can get along without Mike this year," says center Vlade Divac. "Well, for a while, anyway."

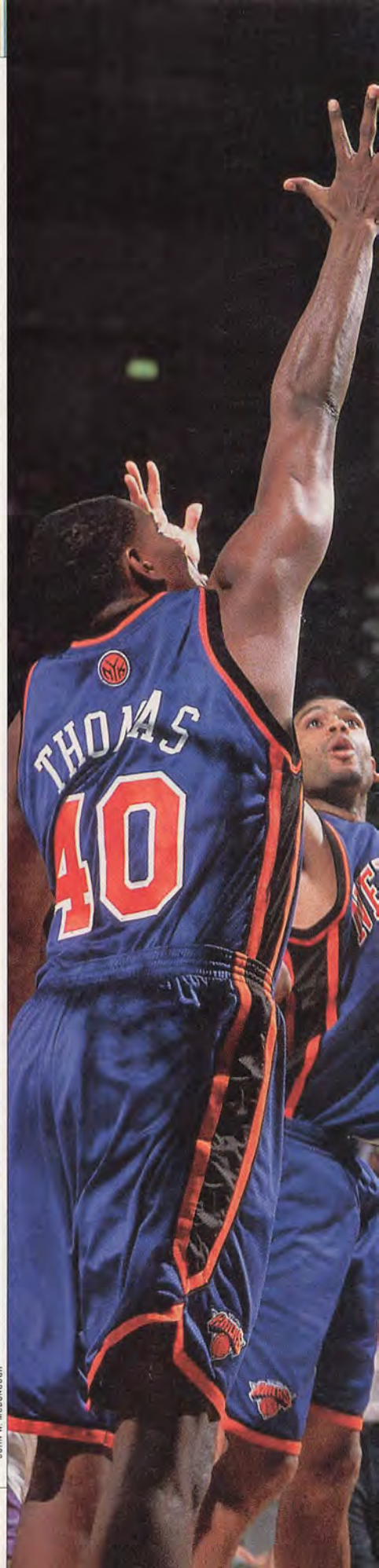
Has one player ever been elevated from good to great as quickly as Bibby? Based almost solely upon his play in the postseason—even more specifically, his performance against the Lakers in the Western Conference finals (22.7 points per game)—the 24-year-old Bibby is now routinely rated with the top point guards in the league. He's also being correspondingly paid, having been rewarded in the off-season with a seven-year, $80 million contract. Which raises the question: Is the *real* Bibby that good? "Of course Mike is that good," Divac declares. "The way he played in the playoffs is what is in his heart and spirit."

Before the playoffs, though, Bibby averaged only 13.7 points and 5.0 assists. Either his postseason was a frightfully brilliant anomaly or it's an instance of a hero emerging at a time when he's most sorely needed. And, boy, was Bibby sorely needed. When franchise co-owner Gavin Maloof made his overheated remark recently that the Kings "could be one of the greatest teams ever," he must have forgotten some of the deficiencies shown by his team in the clutch, most prominently the uncertain marksmanship of players like Webber, shooting guard Doug Christie and forward Peja Stojakovic.

Thus the Kings must do a little tweaking to get by the Lakers. Forward Hedo Turkoglu has added not only blond hair but also 15 weight-room pounds and has made noise about wanting to start ahead of Christie. That probably won't happen early, but the Holy Turk (as backup center Scot Pollard calls him) might steal playing time from Stojakovic, who must do a better job of creating his own shot and demonstrate some kind of low-post game. Meanwhile, minutes have to be found for guard Bobby Jackson, runner-up in last year's voting for best sixth man. (Another potentially disruptive element is Webber's federal court date, yet to be scheduled, on charges of perjury in connection with the money laundering trial of Michigan booster Ed Martin.)

One other change will almost certainly be positive: Lanky free-agent signee Keon Clark will reduce Divac's minutes, at least during the regular season, which is O.K. with Divac. "Of all our main guys," said the 34-year-old Yugoslav, "I'm the only one who can go down in performance."

Not quite true, Vlade. Your wide-eyed point guard now has an injury to come back from and an abundance of expectations to live up to. —*Jack McCallum*



JOHN W. MCDONOUGH

JUMP STARTER With Bibby out until December, the energetic Jackson shifts from the bench to the opening lineup.

FAST FACT The Kings were one of two teams with a winning record (18–17) last season when allowing 100 or more points. (Dallas was 26–20.)

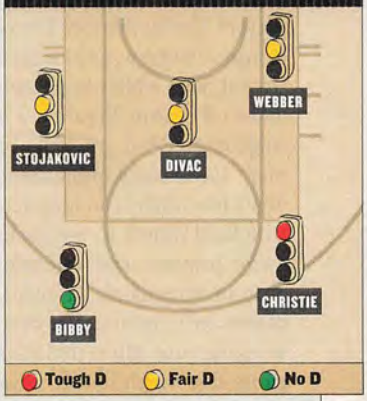
ENEMY LINES an opposing team's scout sizes up the Kings

"Their fourth-quarter collapse against the Lakers won't affect them until they're in the same situation again next spring. If **Peja Stojakovic** had been healthy, he might have put them over the top. . . The only guy who might have trouble with his confidence is **Doug Christie**, especially if he loses his starting job to **Hedo Turkoglu** during the season. . . . Remember how the Kings got off to a good start without **Chris Webber** last year? They're going to have a harder time trying to make do without **Mike Bibby**. **Bobby Jackson** is a good sixth man, but he's going to struggle against the frontline point guards. . . . When

WEBBER LIKES TO SET UP AT THE ELBOW, BUT HE NEEDS TO POST UP SO HE CAN GET TO THE LINE.

Bibby was with the Grizzlies, it was easy to stop his penetration by throwing bodies at him. But the Kings spread the floor so well that when he gets in the lane he only has to deal with one or two defenders. Webber likes to set up on the elbow because he can pass or score from there, but they need to go back to posting him up so he can get to the free throw line more. It would also help if he were a consistent free throw shooter. . . I don't think **Keon Clark** is going to fit in with the Kings as well as he did with the Raptors. Sacramento's other big men are incredible passers, but Clark isn't. . . . Coach **Rick Adelman** has won in Portland and Sacramento because he's had good players and also because he treats them like men and sticks up for them. . . . I love watching them play, but I hate scouting them. The Lakers and Nets use five-man motion and reads, but the Kings are even more inscrutable. They run isolations that seem to be based on eye contact. I'd like to be able to tell my coaches, 'When they call this play, they do such and such,' but they come down the floor without calling any play, and then they'll run several variations out of the same set. . . . The Stojakovic-Webber two-man game is especially deadly."

DEFENSIVE RATINGS



PROJECTED LINEUP

2001–02 record: 61–21 (first in Pacific)
Points scored: 104.6 (2nd) Points allowed: 97.0 (19th)
Coach: Rick Adelman (fifth season with Kings)

STARTERS	PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
SF **Peja Stojakovic**	20	21.2 ppg	5.3 rpg	1.14 spg	48.4 FG%	41.6 3FG%
PF **Chris Webber**	7	24.5 ppg	10.1 rpg	4.8 apg	1.41 bpg	49.5 FG%
C **Vlade Divac**	37	11.1 ppg	8.4 rpg	3.7 apg	1.18 bpg	47.2 FG%
SG **Doug Christie**	73	12.0 ppg	4.6 rpg	4.2 apg	1.98 spg	46.0 FG%
PG **Mike Bibby**	80	13.7 ppg	5.0 apg	1.09 spg	45.3 FG%	37.0 3FG%

BENCH	PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
G **Bobby Jackson**	101	11.1 ppg	3.1 rpg	2.0 apg	0.90 spg	44.3 FG%
G-F **Hedo Turkoglu**	118	10.1 ppg	4.5 rpg	2.0 apg	42.2 FG%	36.8 3FG%
F-C **Keon Clark**	153	11.3 ppg	7.4 rpg	1.1 apg	1.51 bpg	49.0 FG%
F-C **Scot Pollard**	199	6.4 ppg	7.1 rpg	0.95 bpg	0.88 spg	55.0 FG%
G-F **Gerald Wallace**	285	3.2 ppg	1.6 rpg	0.5 apg	0.35 spg	42.9 FG%

New acquisition (R) Rookie (statistics for final college season) *PVR: Player Value Ranking (explanation on page 92)

2

LOS ANGELES LAKERS

Even after Shaquille O'Neal returns from an injury, the champs will rely on the leadership of the increasingly Michael-like Kobe Bryant

COULD THIS be the year that Kobe Bryant equals—it seems premature to suggest surpasses—Michael Jordan as a player? The similarities between the two continue to grow, as has the 24-year-old Bryant, who added 15 pounds of muscle in the off-season. Bryant has Jordan's gait (pigeon-toed but graceful), his temperament (seemingly implacable, then suddenly incendiary) and his versatile game (the fluid moves to the basket, the fallaway jumper, the relentless darting around screens on defense). And now, thanks to a Jordanesque compulsion for working out that includes frequent game-day weightlifting, Bryant has Jordan's body, too. "I went from big to bigger, from thick to thicker, from swoll to swollen," says the 6' 7", 225-pound Bryant, sounding a bit like You Know Who. Kobe's wife, Vanessa, also put on a few pounds of late; she is pregnant with their first child, a girl, due in February.

If it seems too early to conjure up the Kobe-channels-Michael theme, well, there isn't much new to say about the three-time defending champions, who are dedicating the season to Chick Hearn, their Hall of Fame play-by-play man who died in August. Shaquille O'Neal, Butch to Kobe's Sundance, begins the season as a footnote—he may miss part of November after off-season surgery on his right big toe—and coach Phil Jackson has not yet begun in earnest the mind games certain to accompany his quest for a four-peat. The Lakers' supporting cast, which took heat for failing to supply adequate succor to the two superstars before the sweep of the Nets in the Finals, is more or less the same, though there is less of backup guard Brian Shaw, who shed 15 pounds.

But clear it away, and there stands Bryant, the easygoing assassin who has toughened up by sparring with one of his bodyguards from time to time. "I can hit him on the shoulders and chest," says Bryant with a smile, "but he's not allowed to hit me." To a degree Kobe is still the junior member of the triumvirate that rules the Lakers. He will listen to Jackson—having been chastened last

MUSCLING UP Bryant let his teammates know that he wants a fourth title by coming to camp packing 15 more pounds.

season after rebelling against Big Chief Triangle—and defer to O'Neal, whose public proclamations tend to be more lapidary, or at least nuttier. But look for the junior member to become the true leader of this team. It was Bryant who persuaded Shaw & Co. to get in peak physical condition, and it was Bryant whose strong hints about playing in the Olympics have O'Neal and Jackson considering a 2004 trip to Greece.

"When I get back, there's going to be trouble, I can tell you that," said O'Neal, "but until then the lieutenant general [Bryant] can hold down the fort." The best all-around player in the game will do a whole lot more than that. —J.M.

JOHN W. MCDONOUGH

FAST FACT The Lakers have been led in scoring by Kobe Bryant or Shaquille O'Neal in 240 of their last 244 regular and postseason games.

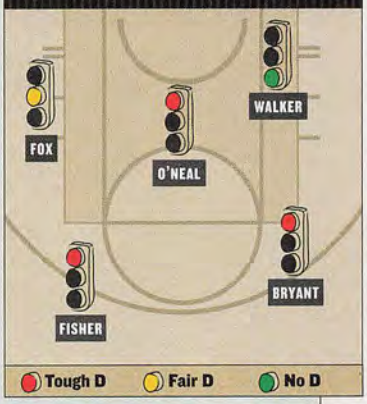
ENEMY LINES an opposing team's scout sizes up the Lakers

"It's about time **Phil Jackson** got credit for being one of the alltime great coaches. Defensively, the Lakers last season held opponents to the lowest field goal percentage and three-point percentage in the league. They were second in defensive rebounds, second in fewest turnovers committed and ninth in assists. They're a well-coached, well-disciplined team. Jackson has sustained excellence in two places with different kinds of players. Sure, he had the best players, but he's keeping them hungry. I would have thought complacency might have set in with **Shaquille O'Neal**, but it hasn't.... Making

IT'S A JOKE THAT SHAQ ISN'T VOTED MVP EVERY YEAR NO MATTER HOW MANY GAMES HE MISSES.

Kobe Bryant work defensively has to be part of your game plan; you can't let him rest and then take it out on you at the offensive end. Kobe isn't Michael Jordan on defense, but he gives a good effort....The Lakers are developing replacements for their key role players. **Devean George** would be a starter on a lot of other teams, and he'll eventually take over for **Rick Fox**. In the next year or two **Kareem Rush** will probably replace **Brian Shaw**. The knock on Rush was that he's a little soft, but they used to say the same thing about Fox before he found his niche with the Lakers....The one player who might be affected by age is **Robert Horry**, their third threat in the big games. The starter at power forward, **Samaki Walker**, has yet to show signs of consistency....**Derek Fisher** isn't a pure point guard, and on most teams he would be a solid backup, but he fills the Lakers' needs by playing good on-the-ball defense, keeping them organized in the triangle, knowing when to push the tempo and hitting open shots....If you took Kobe off that team I bet they'd still win the championship, because Shaq's presence does so much to make all the other guys better. It's a joke that Shaq doesn't win the MVP award every year, no matter how many games he misses."

DEFENSIVE RATINGS



PROJECTED LINEUP

2001–02 record: 58–24 (second in Pacific)
Points scored: 101.3 (3rd) Points allowed: 94.1 (9th tie)
Coach: Phil Jackson (fourth season with Lakers)

STARTERS	PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
SF Rick Fox	114	7.9 ppg	4.7 rpg	3.5 apg	0.82 spg	42.1 FG%
PF Samaki Walker	188	6.7 ppg	7.0 rpg	0.9 apg	0.41 spg	51.2 FG%
C Shaquille O'Neal	2	27.2 ppg	10.7 rpg	3.0 apg	2.04 bpg	57.9 FG%
SG Kobe Bryant	6	25.2 ppg	5.5 rpg	5.5 apg	1.48 spg	46.9 FG%
PG Derek Fisher	156	11.2 ppg	2.6 apg	0.94 spg	41.1 FG%	41.3 3FG%
BENCH	**PVR***	**2001–02 KEY STATS**				
F Robert Horry	160	6.8 ppg	5.9 rpg	2.9 apg	1.10 bpg	39.8 FG%
G-F Devean George	181	7.1 ppg	3.7 rpg	1.4 apg	0.87 spg	41.1 FG%
F Tracy Murray	251	5.7 ppg	1.3 rpg	0.5 apg	41.1 FG%	38.5 3FG%
G Brian Shaw	270	2.9 ppg	1.9 rpg	1.5 apg	0.43 spg	35.3 FG%
C Soumaila Samake†	323	1.4 ppg	1.6 rpg	0.41 bpg	37.5 FG%	41.7 FT%

New acquisition (R) Rookie (statistics for final college season) †2000–01 statistics *PVR: Player Value Ranking (explanation on page 92)

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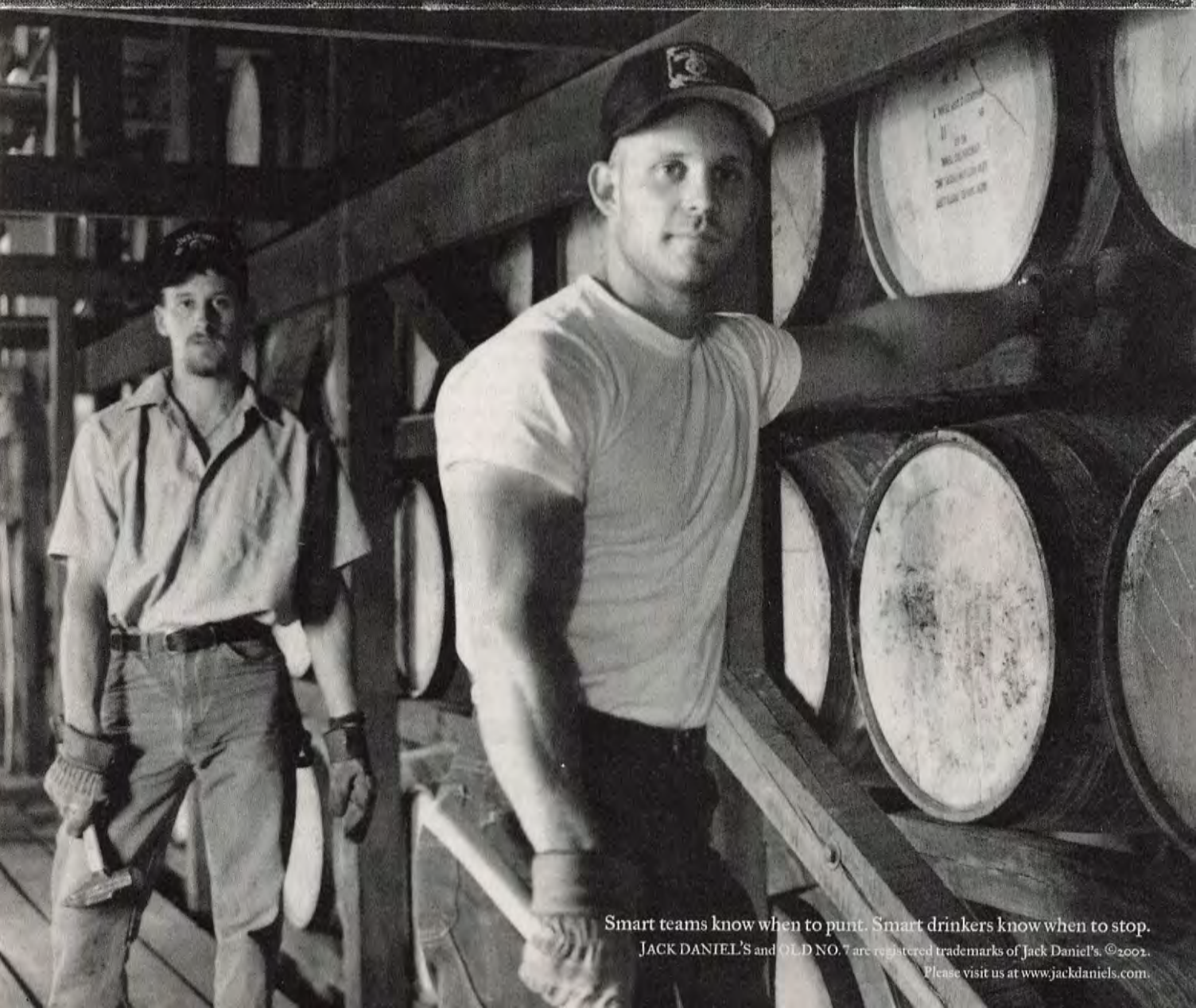

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3

SAN ANTONIO SPURS

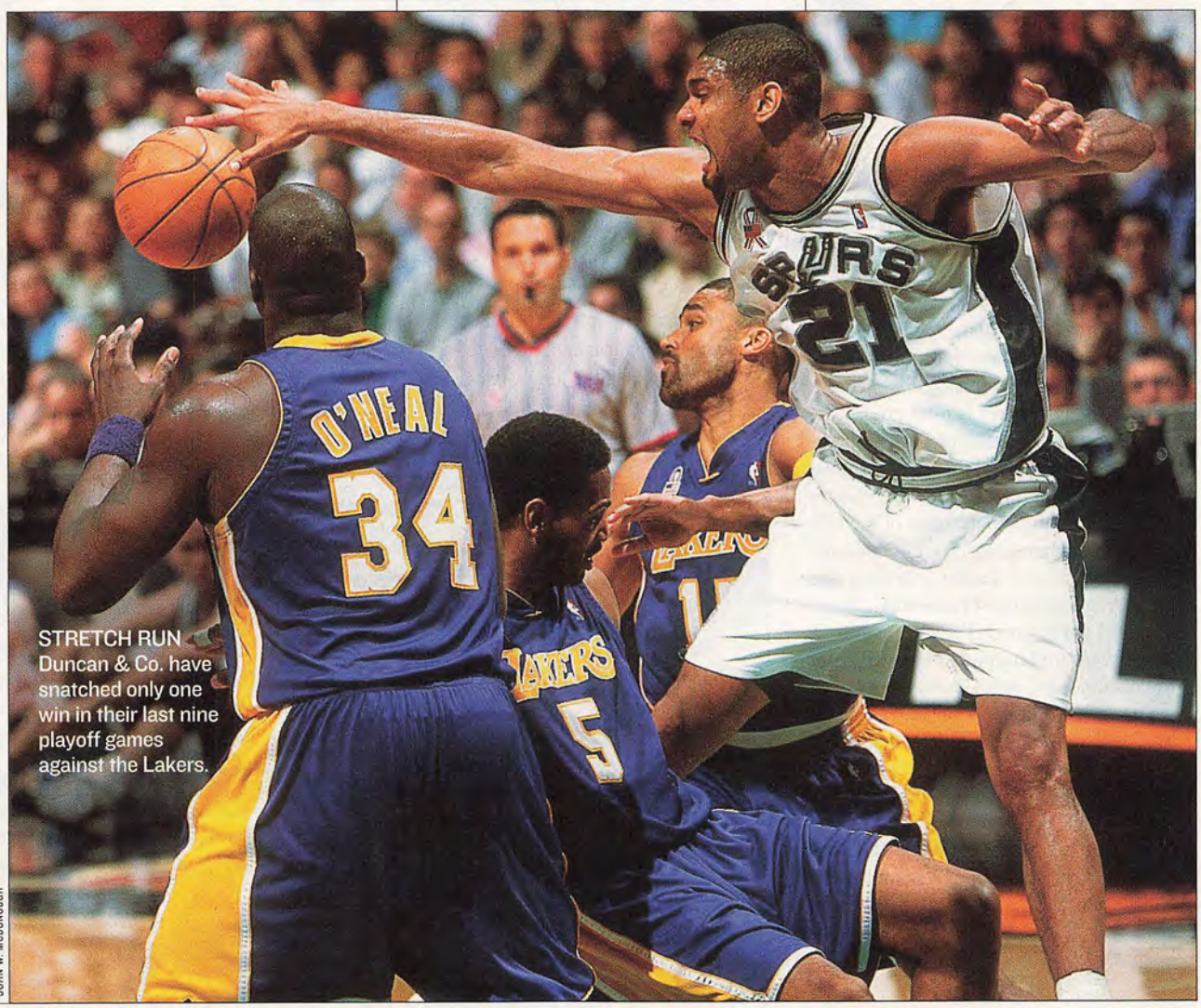
There's not a lot more that a franchise can ask of reigning MVP Tim Duncan—although his coach still sees room for improvement in one crucial area

THE SPURS will make a run at 60 wins, Tim Duncan is the odds-on choice to retain his MVP award, and guard Emanuel Ginobili is a favorite for Rookie of the Year. And none of that will matter if San Antonio can't find a way to beat Shaq and Kobe, who have gone 8–1 against the Spurs over the last two postseasons.

"I had a chance to step away for a year and look at the team from a different perspective," says 37-year-old backup guard Steve Kerr, who is back in San Antonio after spending last season with the Blazers. "What I see clearly is that we need to get other guys involved more around Tim. We have to take a cue from the Lakers, who didn't start winning until they got everybody involved around Shaq."

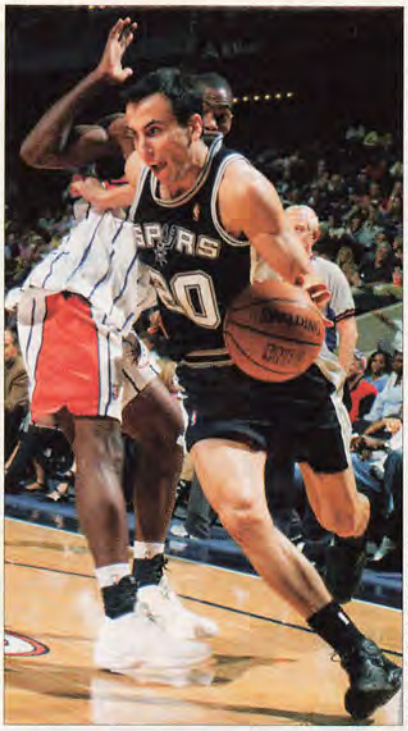
With three newcomers—Steve Smith, Bruce Bowen and rookie Tony Parker—in his starting lineup last year, coach Gregg Popovich says he wasn't surprised that the Spurs repeatedly wilted down the stretch against the Lakers. "Making shots is huge in the fourth quarter, and that means getting the open shots that you're used to making," he says. "You know the Lakers are going to execute, but you can't exacerbate things by breaking down."

While it appears that Duncan's game requires little fine-tuning, Popovich would like to see his go-to guy—who last season became the fifth player in league history



STRETCH RUN Duncan & Co. have snatched only one win in their last nine playoff games against the Lakers.

JOHN W. MCDONOUGH



BILL BAPTIST/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES

G FORCE After starring for Argentina at the world championships, Ginobili is set to do a turn as the Spurs' answer to Kobe.

to rank in the top five in scoring, rebounding and blocks—be more assertive at crunch time. "He can be more hungry as a scorer in certain possessions, and he can also demand more from his teammates," says Popovich. "I see him being more aggressive in everything he does."

More crucial to San Antonio's success will be how well Parker and Ginobili mesh with Duncan. Parker is only 20, but he plays with the swagger of a 10-year All-Star. Ginobili is one of this season's most anticipated rookies, a 25-year-old slasher who led Argentina to its upset of the U.S. at the world championships this summer. Eventually, he and Parker will form one of the league's quickest backcourts. "Even though I am a scorer, I've always been a player who understands very well what the team needs," says Ginobili.

Ginobili won't be as prolific as Kobe, but his daring athleticism could, in time, provide San Antonio with a similarly lethal weapon. "At the end of the game Shaq isn't the problem, because you know where he's going to be and you can double him," says Popovich. "Kobe's the problem because he's hard to get a handle on."

If only Ginobili can create similar headaches. —I.T.

FAST FACT In his 835 NBA games guard Steve Kerr has yet to foul out. Only Wilt Chamberlain went more games without being disqualified (1,045).

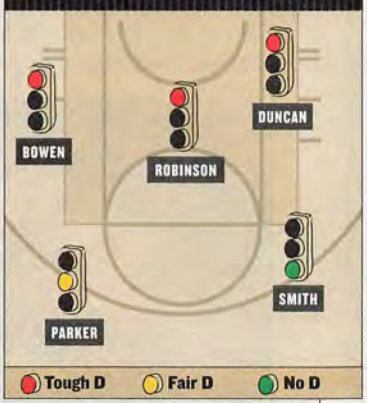
ENEMY LINES an opposing team's scout sizes up the Spurs

"The Spurs shot about 45 percent in the fourth quarter during the regular season, but it was close to 33 percent in their second-round playoff series against the Lakers. They didn't have guys who could make shots in the clutch, which is why I like the acquisitions of **Emanuel Ginobili** and **Steve Kerr**, and the fact that **Tony Parker** is a year older. I'm betting that Ginobili can do for San Antonio what he did against some of the best NBA players in the world championships—create his own opportunities with the clock running down and drive the lane either to score or set up a teammate. He's going to have to work hard

I LOVE ROSE, BUT HE TURNS THE BALL OVER A LOT AND HAS TROUBLE SCORING OVER BIGGER GUYS.

to move ahead of **Steve Smith** in the starting lineup, but it would be in Smith's best interests to play fewer minutes. His knees are shot, and if he's fresh heading into the playoffs, he'll be a much bigger help than he was last year.... What more can they ask of **Tim Duncan**? Against the Lakers he put up 29 points, 17 rebounds, 4½ assists and three blocks per game. Also last year he improved his foul shooting from 62 percent to 80 percent, which is more proof of his greatness.... **David Robinson** is a high-percentage shooter who could take more shots than his 8.6 attempts per game last season; that would take some pressure off Duncan.... We'll have to see how much help they'll get from 40-year-old **Kevin Willis**; at the very least he and **Mengke Bateer** give San Antonio extra bulk and fouls off the bench to stand up to Shaq.... I love **Malik Rose**'s heart and effort. He fights for rebounds and loose balls, but he also turns the ball over a lot and has trouble scoring over the bigger guys.... **Speedy Claxton** is a tremendous penetrator and does a great job of pressuring the ball, but he hit only four of 33 threes last year. In the playoffs he won't be able to penetrate as easily, so to be effective he's going to have to prove that he can hit the outside shot."

DEFENSIVE RATINGS



PROJECTED LINEUP

2001–02 record: 58–24 (first in Midwest)
Points scored: 96.7 (10th) Points allowed: 90.5 (3rd)
Coach: Gregg Popovich (seventh season with Spurs)

STARTERS	PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
SF **Bruce Bowen**	162	7.0 ppg	2.7 rpg	1.5 apg	1.05 spg	38.9 FG%
PF **Tim Duncan**	1	25.5 ppg	12.7 rpg	3.7 apg	2.48 bpg	50.8 FG%
C **David Robinson**	57	12.2 ppg	8.3 rpg	1.79 bpg	1.10 spg	50.7 FG%
SG **Steve Smith**	112	11.6 ppg	2.5 rpg	2.0 apg	45.5 FG%	47.2 3FG%
PG **Tony Parker**	99	9.2 ppg	2.6 rpg	4.3 apg	1.16 spg	41.9 FG%

BENCH	PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
G **Emanuel Ginobili (R)**	136	19.9 ppg	4.4 rpg	2.2 apg	53.0 FG%	39.8 3FG%
F **Malik Rose**	195	9.4 ppg	6.0 rpg	0.7 apg	0.85 spg	46.3 FG%
G **Speedy Claxton**	219	7.2 ppg	2.4 rpg	3.0 apg	1.42 spg	40.0 FG%
F **Danny Ferry**	229	4.6 ppg	1.8 rpg	1.0 apg	42.9 FG%	43.4 3FG%
C-F **Kevin Willis**	290	6.1 ppg	5.8 rpg	0.44 bpg	0.48 spg	44.0 FG%

New acquisition (R) Rookie (statistics from Italian League) *PVR: Player Value Ranking (explanation on page 92)

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4

For all the fun in run-and-gun, the Mavs learned that there's no substitute for strong defense. Can these guys get serious about clamping down?

DALLAS MAVERICKS

IT'S EASY to forget that Don Nelson, the mad scientist of offensive strategy, began his coaching career with the Bucks emphasizing defense. Milwaukee ranked as the top defensive team in the league from 1980–81 through '85–86, based on opponents' field goal percentage. "Coaches should spend more time on defense than offense," says a born-again Nelson. "On offense you want your players to feel free to play, but on defense you want them to really zero in."

It's back to basics for the 62-year-old Nelson as he enters the final coaching season of his contract. Against the Kings in the second round last spring the high-octane Mavericks came up short because of their failure to produce fourth-quarter defensive stops. So Nelson shelved the offensive playbook for the first week of training camp, a change his players welcomed. "We're not a team of defensive stoppers," says point guard Steve Nash, "but we can be a good defensive team."

That depends mostly on the play of the Dallas big men. One promising sign is the rejuvenation of 7' 6" center Shawn Bradley, who was out of shape last season and started just 16 games. He spent the summer working out in Dallas and is in the best condition of his career. His return to the starter's job will allow Nelson to shift 6' 11" Raef LaFrentz—who arrived through a trade last February—to power forward. Their shot-blocking prowess should liberate 7-foot small forward Dirk Nowitzki and 6' 6" shooting guard Michael Finley to play tighter defense against smaller, quicker scorers. "Our rotations as a team have to be sharper," says Nowitzki. "If my man beats me, then I've got to know my teammate is coming to help me and that somebody else is coming over to help the helper."

It won't be easy to maintain defensive continuity because Nelson likes to juggle his lineup from game to game, taking advantage of the Mavs' depth and versatility. While a number of the subs are skilled defenders, the starters must set the defensive standard if Dallas is to contend for a title.

No one has embraced the new approach more than Finley, 29, who focused on defense this summer while training with the U.S. team and playing pickup games in his hometown of Chicago. "He's not a good defender, but he's working as hard as anybody," says Nelson. Finley hopes to pattern himself after Larry Bird, who wasn't skilled enough to be a stopper but who knew how to play effective team defense. "Bird worked hard at defense, and his team was successful," Finley says. "After the playoffs last season I realized that I had to become a better defender individually and bring that same mind-set to the team."

It won't be easy to change the culture, but the Mavs have no other option. "We need to concentrate on defense over the long haul," says Nash, "and not just be cramming for the final exam." If by midseason they've reverted to outgunning opponents, you can write them off as challengers to the Lakers, the Kings and the Spurs. —I.T.

JOHN W. MCDONOUGH

DRIVING AMBITION No scoring slouch, Finley spent his off-season working toward a more well-rounded game.

FAST FACT In 2001–02 the Mavericks set a record for fewest turnovers; their average of 12.1 lowered the '96–97 Pistons' mark of 12.7.

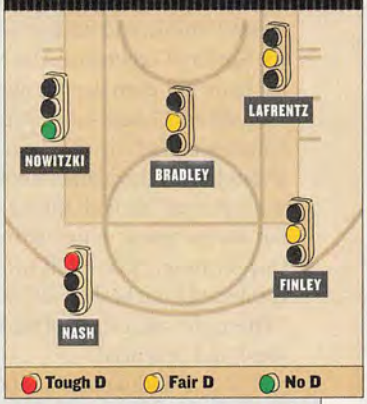
ENEMY LINES an opposing team's scout sizes up the Mavericks

"I see them improving just because **Dirk Nowitzki** keeps getting better. You can't stop him—he can score inside and out—so you just ask your defender to be physical with him and not give him any open shots.... I'm a big fan of **Michael Finley**. He's the third star there, behind Nowitzki and **Steve Nash**, but it has to be awkward for him because there's always talk about him being traded. He doesn't complain and he continues to act as a leader ... **Don Nelson** does a great job of explaining things to his players and keeping them aware of their roles. It looks like he's gotten **Nick Van Exel**

I DON'T SEE THEM CHANGING THEIR IDENTITY. THEY WILL ALWAYS GIVE UP EASY BASKETS.

to accept coming off the bench. The Mavs are loaded when it comes to making last-second plays. They can put Finley, Nash, Nowitzki, Van Exel and **Raef LaFrentz** out there, knowing each guy's got experience at hitting a game-winning shot... I don't think the Mavericks can change their identity and become a defensive team. Their up-and-down style leaves them unbalanced; they're always going to give up easy baskets because of the way they play offense. When they were having trouble on defense in the preseason, they were switching to a zone. If they were sincere about getting tougher on defense, they would stick with man-to-man and force their guys to play it—even if it means embarrassing them. There aren't any quick fixes. The most important thing for Dallas is to stop making trades and see if the core players can grow together over time.... It's going to come down to playing hard defense on crucial possessions, and those key plays aren't going to be decided by the coaching staff. The players have to decide whether they're committed. It's a moot point anyway. Unless Shaq gets hurt, there's no way the Mavericks are beating the Lakers."

DEFENSIVE RATINGS



PROJECTED LINEUP

2001–02 record: 57–25 (second in Midwest)
Points scored: 105.2 (1st) Points allowed: 101.0 (28th)
Coach: Don Nelson (sixth season with Mavericks)

STARTERS		PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
SF	**Dirk Nowitzki**	8	23.4 ppg	9.9 rpg	1.01 bpg	47.7 FG%	39.7 3FG%
PF	**Raef LaFrentz**	45	13.5 ppg	7.4 rpg	2.73 bpg	45.8 FG%	38.8 3FG%
C	**Shawn Bradley**	194	4.1 ppg	3.3 rpg	1.21 bpg	47.9 FG%	92.2 FT%
SG	**Michael Finley**	28	20.6 ppg	5.2 rpg	3.3 apg	0.94 spg	46.3 FG%
PG	**Steve Nash**	35	17.9 ppg	3.1 rpg	7.7 apg	48.3 FG%	45.5 3FG%

BENCH		PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
G	**Nick Van Exel**	88	18.4 ppg	3.5 rpg	6.6 apg	40.9 FG%	34.0 3FG%
G-F	**Adrian Griffin**	176	7.2 ppg	3.9 rpg	1.8 apg	1.29 spg	49.9 FG%
G-F	**Walt Williams**	203	9.4 ppg	3.4 rpg	1.4 apg	41.9 FG%	42.6 3FG%
F	**Popeye Jones**	240	7.0 ppg	7.3 rpg	1.6 apg	0.63 spg	43.7 FG%
F	**Eduardo Najera**	273	6.5 ppg	5.5 rpg	0.6 apg	0.90 spg	50.0 FG%

New acquisition (R) Rookie (statistics for final college season) *PVR: Player Value Ranking (explanation on page 92)

5

One of the game's deepest benches got deeper, but with no leading man to complement a talented supporting cast, the result could be deep trouble

PORTLAND
TRAIL BLAZERS

ANYONE WHO thinks depth can't be a problem has never stepped in a puddle or coached the Trail Blazers, whose second unit would make the playoffs in the Eastern Conference. The NBA's deepest team got even deeper over the summer when 37-year-old center Arvydas Sabonis ended his one-year sabbatical and rejoined the team. Sabonis's return was spurred by, of all things, the Brazilian soccer team, which won the World Cup in June. "For eight months I disconnected from basketball," Sabonis says. "Then, the next day [after the final] I went and practiced."

The 7' 3" Lithuanian has been a fan of Brazil since childhood, drawn to the squad by, among other things, their well-orchestrated style of play. After watching the cohesion and passion with which the Samba Boys played during the World Cup, Sabonis realized how much he missed the intensity of pro competition. If the Blazers are going to be successful, they are going to have to play a hoops version of the Beautiful Game. Whether that is possible will depend largely on how coach Maurice Cheeks doles out playing time.

Cheeks has a number of delicate decisions facing him. At point guard, for instance, the team signed free agent Jeff McInnis and traded for Antonio Daniels to compete with the incumbent, Damon Stoudamire, who makes more than $13 million and has intimated that if he isn't the starter, he wants to be traded. Then there's the small forward position, where 37-year-old Scottie Pippen is one of the NBA's 50 greatest players of all time but not one of the 50 greatest players of the present time. Assuming that Pippen fully recovers (as expected) from offseason surgery on his right knee, 27-year-old Ruben Patterson will again be relegated to the bench. "He's Scottie. He's going to play that position," says Patterson. "I'm not mad about it, because I respect Scottie and I learn a lot from him."

He also outplays him. The 6' 5", 224-pound Patterson outscored Pippen in nine fewer minutes per game, was seventh in the league in field goal percentage and is one of the game's best defenders. (He averaged 16.5 points and 5.4 boards in his 13 starts.) "The way Ruben plays, he can get 18, 19 points a game without having a play called for him, just because of his hustle, the way he rebounds and the way he runs the floor," says Stoudamire. With one year in Portland under his belt, Patterson, who signed as a free agent from Seattle before last season, showed up at camp displaying more leadership qualities and an all-around improved game. "His shot looks better, he's handling the ball better, he's not trying to force things as much," says Cheeks. "I'm looking for great things from Ruben."

The addition of Sabonis, who reported to camp in very good shape, gives Portland 15 to 20 minutes a night of decent offense and someone who can lean on Shaq. But he's a supporting player, and the Blazers have plenty of those; what they need is superstar power. "We have a lot of pretty good players," says Cheeks. "We don't have, like, great, great players." —*Mark Bechtel*

BILL FRAKES

HIGHLY PRODUCTIVE With hustle and efficient shooting, Patterson did more for Portland last year than Pippen did.

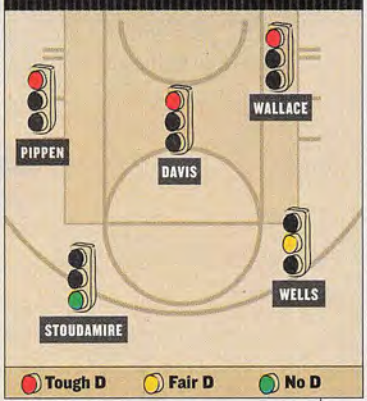
FAST FACT Scottie Pippen is 26 steals behind ex-Blazers star Clyde Drexler (fourth alltime) and 129 behind his coach, Maurice Cheeks (third).

ENEMY LINES an opposing team's scout sizes up the Trail Blazers

"If character wasn't an issue, I'd put their talent right up there with the Lakers. In any case they ought to be in that second tier with San Antonio and Dallas....With owner **Paul Allen** willing to pay top dollar, they should be able to bring in high-quality players. So why do they go after so many head cases? A lot of us figure it's because **Bob Whitsitt** relies on assistant G.M. **Mark Warkentien**. He was the recruiter at UNLV for Jerry Tarkanian, who believed in taking those kinds of players as long as they worked hard....They're versatile, and they're an excellent rebounding and defensive team. The only issue is outside shooting. They might miss Steve Kerr on those nights when they can't get anything else going....Their best weapons are **Rasheed Wallace** and **Bonzi Wells**, who would be an All-Star if not for his streaky shooting....Wallace takes a lot of heat for his technicals, but I think he's among the least of their problems. He's a reliable go-to guy in crucial moments, he's a true team player, and they say he's one of their better teammates in the locker room.... They were at their best last year when **Scottie Pippen** took over the point and **Damon Stoudamire** moved to the two. It's going to be hard for Stoudamire, at 5' 10", to pair up with 6' 4" **Jeff McInnis**, because their size will be exploited....There were times early last year when I thought Pippen was done, so we'll have to see how long it takes him to recover from knee surgery at 37. He might not do much until the second half of the season....It isn't going to get any easier for **Mo Cheeks**. I saw McInnis hollering at Alvin Gentry a lot last season. In preseason they were making it a priority to avoid getting into it with the refs, but that's one of those believe-it-when-you-see-it things....Their best one-on-one player is rookie **Qyntel Woods**, who is extremely talented—as well as being yet another head case."

WALLACE TAKES HEAT FOR HIS TECHNICALS, BUT HE'S AMONG THE LEAST OF THEIR PROBLEMS.

DEFENSIVE RATINGS



PROJECTED LINEUP

2001–02 record: 49–33 (third in Pacific)
Points scored: 96.6 (11th) Points allowed: 93.7 (8th)
Coach: Maurice Cheeks (second season with Trail Blazers)

STARTERS		PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
SF	**Scottie Pippen**	84	10.6 ppg	5.2 rpg	5.9 apg	1.63 spg	41.1 FG%
PF	**Rasheed Wallace**	21	19.3 ppg	8.2 rpg	1.28 bpg	1.28 spg	46.9 FG%
C	**Dale Davis**	103	9.5 ppg	8.8 rpg	1.2 apg	1.06 bpg	51.0 FG%
SG	**Bonzi Wells**	38	17.0 ppg	6.0 rpg	2.8 apg	1.53 spg	46.9 FG%
PG	**Damon Stoudamire**	76	13.5 ppg	6.5 apg	0.89 spg	40.2 FG%	35.3 3FG%

BENCH		PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
G	**Derek Anderson**	130	10.8 ppg	2.7 rpg	3.1 apg	0.97 spg	40.4 FG%
F	**Ruben Patterson**	138	11.2 ppg	4.0 rpg	1.4 apg	1.05 spg	51.5 FG%
G	**Jeff McInnis**	206	14.6 ppg	2.6 rpg	6.2 apg	0.78 spg	41.3 FG%
C	**Arvydas Sabonis†**	212	10.1 ppg	5.4 rpg	1.5 apg	1.02 bpg	47.9 FG%
F	**Zach Randolph**	245	2.8 ppg	1.7 rpg	0.3 apg	44.9 FG%	66.7 FT%

New acquisition (R) Rookie (statistics for final college season)
†2000–01 statistics
*PVR: Player Value Ranking (explanation on page 92)

6

For a leaner, hungrier Houston team, the future is Yao, with a new offensive system designed to take advantage of the center's lofty view of the court

HOUSTON ROCKETS

"I'M TIRED of losing and watching other guys playing in June," says stellar point guard Steve Francis, who enters his fourth year without postseason experience. "I'm in the gym shooting and they're on TV playing. The honest truth is that we can be as good as any team in the conference if we all stay on the same page."

That's a big if for a team with an average age of 25. Hurdles include inexperience, particularly that of 7' 5" center Yao Ming, the league's No. 1 draft choice, who will be going from China's Shanghai Sharks to the NBA, and Francis's continuing problems with Ménière's disease, which caused migrainelike headaches, blurred vision and dizziness last season. Though Francis has been on medication and a low-sodium diet since last February, he is still suffering. "I'm taking every step possible, but until I feel 100 percent better for 30 days in a row I can't say I'm cured," says Francis, who missed seven games because of the illness in 2001–02.

Yet Francis believes the Rockets, racked by injuries last season, can be better than the team that won 45 games two seasons ago. Coach Rudy Tomjanovich has installed a motion offense to exploit Houston's wealth of talent, which is two deep at every position. "We're going to look a lot crisper," says power forward Maurice Taylor, "and everyone's going to be involved."

ROCKETS' LAUNCHER
If his headaches abate, Francis will continue his ascent through the ranks of the elite point guards.

BILL BAPTIST/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES

BILL BAPTIST/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES

CUT DOWN In Houston's new offense, top scorer Cuttino Mobley isn't likely to get the 18 shots a game he got last year.

The Rockets arrived at training camp saying all the right things and looking hungry—literally. Center Kelvin Cato lost 20 pounds, as did guard Moochie Norris. Forward Kenny Thomas, who four years ago weighed 261 pounds, has whittled 40 pounds off his 6' 7" frame, thus giving Tomjanovich the option of playing him at both forward slots. But the Rocket who ought to write a diet book is the 6' 9" Taylor, who bloated to 312 last spring while recovering from a right Achilles torn before last season. Taylor worried that he would take after Vin Baker and Shawn Kemp, two players whose production dropped off drastically after enormous weight gains. But the pounds began dropping off as soon as Taylor was permitted to start running in late April, exposing an upper body bulked up by the weightlifting he had done during his lost season. Taylor expects to play at 270.

The Rockets could use their youth as an excuse for poor play this season, but Francis is demanding a sense of urgency from himself and his teammates. "Our first day back Coach said, 'If you think about the future, you're going to lose,' " Francis says. "We have to put a whole lot of todays together, starting with today." —I.T.

FAST FACT The 2001–02 Rockets forced the fewest turnovers per game (12.0) since the league began keeping track of the stat in 1970–71.

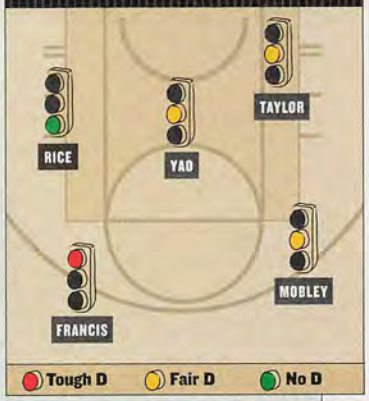
ENEMY LINES an opposing team's scout sizes up the Rockets

"They're a chaotic team. They break off a lot of their plays and end up going one-on-one. That matches the style of their two stars, **Steve Francis** and **Cuttino Mobley**. . . . Francis is no Jason Kidd, but I love him. He dominates the ball but he's unstoppable, he's competitive night in and night out and he's a leader. He's everything that Stephon Marbury ought to be. . . . Mobley has developed some bad habits. He's shown he can hit big shots as the shot clock runs out, so now you see him dribbling out the clock and heaving up tough shots on a regular basis. . . . Houston is weak at shooting guard behind Mobley. **Glen Rice**

YAO'S SHOT-ALTERING HEIGHT MIGHT CHANGE HOUSTON INTO A DECENT DEFENSIVE TEAM.

is no longer quick enough to play there. . . . I give **Rudy Tomjanovich** credit for coaching to his talent. You see him changing plays as they go. It makes them really hard to scout. . . . At first it looks like Rudy runs a loose ship, but he has an ability to get on his players and they accept it. You never hear them bad-mouth him. . . . They're a risk-taking team on both ends. **Yao Ming**'s shot-altering height might change them from a horrible defensive team into a decent one. He should give them an inside presence, even if it's only for 20 minutes a game. . . . Francis and Mobley should love playing with him. You can just see the double-team coming to Yao and his teammates flaring out to receive open jump shots or making hard cuts to the basket. . . . **Eddie Griffin** has turned into a nice player. His body is filling out. Last year he was a perimeter kick-out guy, but he's starting to balance his game with some inside play. . . . **Kelvin Cato** never lived up to expectations as a starter, but he will look very good coming off the bench if Yao takes over. . . . **Maurice Taylor** is more of a skilled player than a dirty-work guy, but he's the only one with the size and strength to be an enforcer inside. . . . This is a team on the way up."

DEFENSIVE RATINGS



PROJECTED LINEUP

2001–02 record: 28–54 (fifth in Midwest)
Points scored: 92.3 (22nd) Points allowed: 97.2 (20th)
Coach: Rudy Tomjanovich (12th season with Rockets)

STARTERS	PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
SF **Glen Rice**	159	8.6 ppg	2.4 rpg	1.6 apg	38.9 FG%	28.1 3FG%
PF **Maurice Taylor†**	120	13.0 ppg	5.5 rpg	1.5 apg	0.55 bpg	48.9 FG%
C **Yao Ming (R)**	48	32.4 ppg	19.0 rpg	2.9 apg	4.50 bpg	72.1 FG%
SG **Cuttino Mobley**	42	21.7 ppg	4.1 rpg	2.5 apg	1.47 spg	43.8 FG%
PG **Steve Francis**	22	21.6 ppg	7.0 rpg	6.4 apg	1.25 spg	41.7 FG%

BENCH	PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
F **Eddie Griffin**	106	8.8 ppg	5.7 rpg	0.7 apg	1.84 bpg	36.6 FG%
G **Moochie Norris**	129	8.1 ppg	3.0 rpg	4.9 apg	0.99 spg	39.8 FG%
F **Kenny Thomas**	132	14.1 ppg	7.2 rpg	1.9 apg	1.18 spg	47.8 FG%
C **Kelvin Cato**	243	6.6 ppg	7.0 rpg	1.27 bpg	0.53 spg	58.3 FG%
F **Terence Morris**	288	3.8 ppg	3.1 rpg	0.9 apg	0.31 spg	38.4 FG%

New acquisition (R) Rookie (statistics from Chinese League)
†2000–01 statistics
*PVR: Player Value Ranking (explanation on page 92)

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7

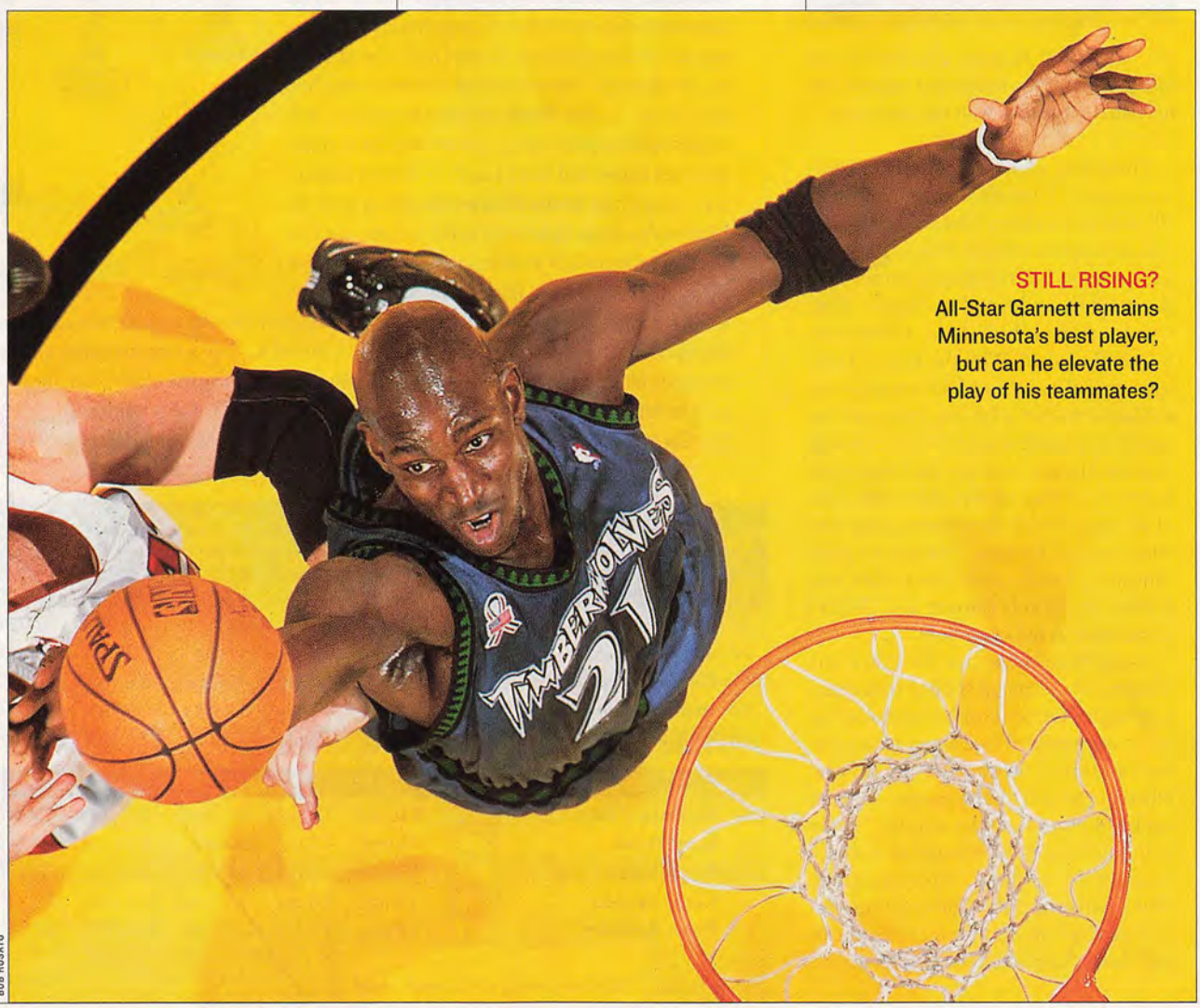
While the seasoned point guard sits injured on the sideline, it will be up to his live-wire young replacement to try to keep things moving on offense

MINNESOTA TIMBERWOLVES

POINT GUARD Terrell Brandon talked last preseason about relinquishing his starting role to a younger player in the not-so-distant future—a notion that seemed absurd once the season started. Brandon handed out a league-best 6.14 assists per turnover and missed only one of his 84 free throw attempts, but even those stats don't convey his importance. He didn't just contribute to the Timberwolves' offense; he also ran it almost every time down the floor.

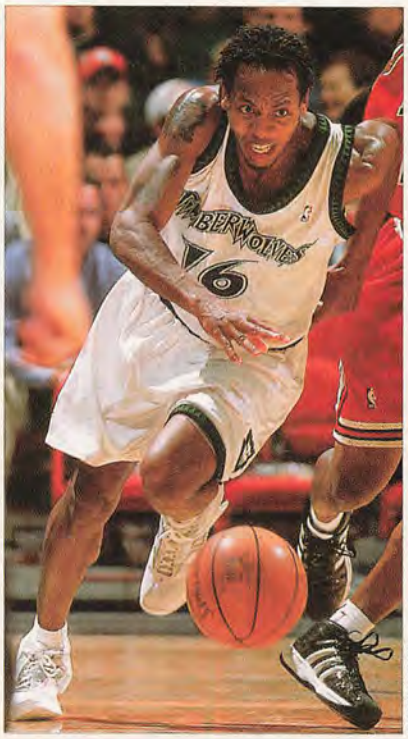
So when Brandon had surgery to repair his left knee last February, Minnesota stumbled and never recovered, bowing in three straight to the Mavericks in the first round of the playoffs. Brandon, 32, is still on the mend, and though he hasn't been officially shelved for this season, coach Flip Saunders is preparing to be without him. "We've opened our offense up a lot," says Saunders. "No one guy's going to be so depended on."

While Brandon is hurting, Saunders is likely to hand the point to Troy Hudson, 26, a wiry bundle of energy who was one of the league's streakiest scorers last season. Though the 6' 1" Hudson has started only 11 games in the past two seasons, he is eager to take charge of the T-Wolves' wide-open attack. "They fit my style," he says. "Up and down."



STILL RISING? All-Star Garnett remains Minnesota's best player, but can he elevate the play of his teammates?

BOB ROSATO



DAVID E. KLUTHO

TO THE POINT Hudson, who started just four games for the Magic last season, will have to run full time with his new team.

That's also an apt description of Hudson's career. Undrafted out of Southern Illinois, he has been waived three times and served two tours of duty in the CBA. Last season he blossomed under Doc Rivers in Orlando, and in August, Minnesota signed him to a three-year, $7.4 million deal. With the Magic, Hudson excelled as a Vinny Johnson type—an explosive player who can come off the bench and ignite a team. Will he be able to pace himself as a starter? Saunders hopes not. "Troy always plays with a lot of energy, so we'll incorporate that into what we do," he says. "We like to push things. He has the ability to do that, and it frees up [Kevin] Garnett and [Wally] Szczerbiak in the open floor."

Aside from those two All-Stars, the Timberwolves' lineup is filled with question marks. Center Rasho Nesterovic will be an unrestricted free agent next summer, and small forward Joe Smith, who faded at the end of last season, came to camp 15 pounds underweight. "We're going to have to be greater as a whole than we are as parts," says Saunders. New offense or not, achieving that goal will depend on how well Hudson can pull those parts together.—*Mark Bechtel*

FAST FACT Kevin Garnett became the first player since Larry Bird in the early '80s to average 20 points, 10 boards and five assists three straight years.

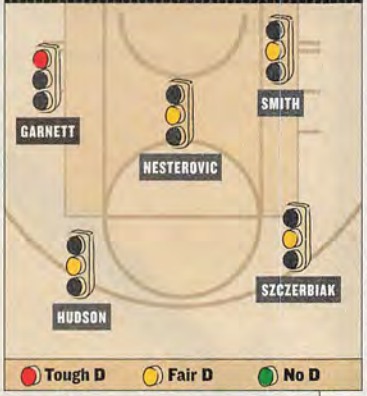
ENEMY LINES an opposing team's scout sizes up the Timberwolves

"There's no doubt **Kevin Garnett** is an elite player, but he's hit a ceiling in terms of making his teammates better. I love his emotional leadership, but there are times when your best player must demand the ball and he must finish—and Garnett has not established himself as someone who comes through in the clutch. He's good enough to carry these guys into the playoffs, but if he wants to advance further, then he has to show he can take over. Otherwise, if he opts out of his contract after 2003–04 and asks for more money, maybe the team should consider trading him and starting over with a lot of new parts.... You don't

GARNETT HAS NOT ESTABLISHED HIMSELF AS SOMEONE WHO COMES THROUGH IN THE CLUTCH.

get better by losing a second-tier player like Chauncey Billups and replacing him with **Troy Hudson**, who is a poor man's Chauncey Billups: a scoring point who's not going to get guys organized for you. That's why **Terrell Brandon**'s comeback from knee surgery is crucial. **Flip Saunders** has one of the thickest playbooks in the league—I bet he has 60 to 75 plays in it—and Brandon can run them all. They break down a lot more when he's not in there.... **Joe Smith** had his poorest year. He's a guy who had a great future, but he never got stronger, never got better, and now he can't go beyond mediocrity....Everything **Rasho Nesterovic** does is quiet. He tends to disappear against the better players, and he's almost an afterthought when you're making a game plan against the T-Wolves....I think **Wally Szczerbiak** is a tough kid who should be Garnett's strongest ally because he's the second-best player on the team. He's not the quickest guy, maybe he looks for his shot a little too much, and he struggles defensively, but he does try. Szczerbiak has heard all the rumors that they've been looking to trade him, and that has to be weighing on him. If they don't deal him, Garnett ought to pull Szczerbiak toward him instead of pushing him away."

DEFENSIVE RATINGS



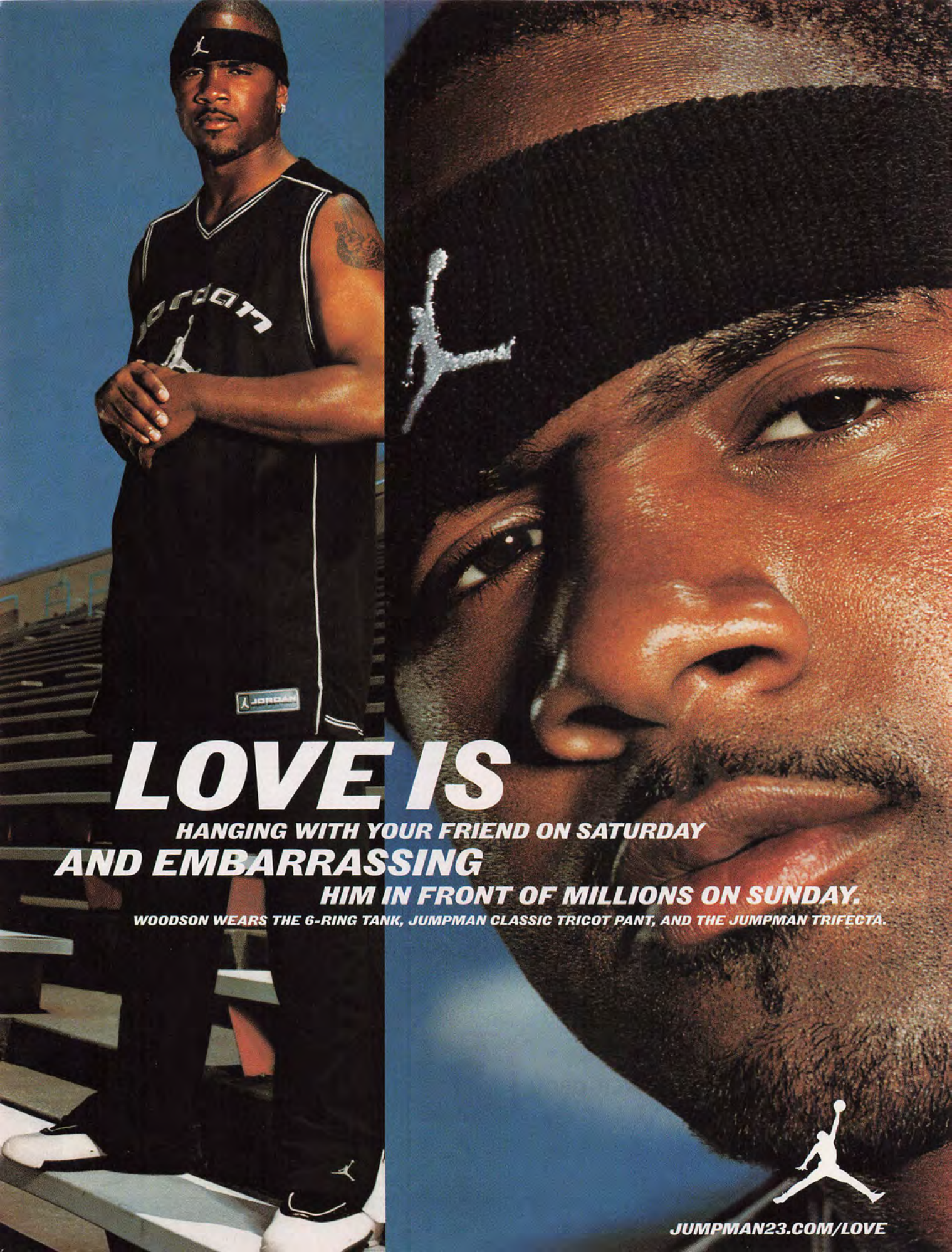
PROJECTED LINEUP

2001–02 record: 50–32 (third in Midwest)
Points scored: 99.3 (5th) Points allowed: 96.0 (16th)
Coach: Flip Saunders (eighth season with Timberwolves)

STARTERS	PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
SF Kevin Garnett	4	21.2 ppg	12.1 rpg	5.2 apg	1.56 bpg	47.0 FG%
PF Joe Smith	126	10.7 ppg	6.3 rpg	1.1 apg	0.82 bpg	51.1 FG%
C Rasho Nesterovic	144	8.4 ppg	6.5 rpg	1.33 bpg	49.3 FG%	54.9 FT%
SG Wally Szczerbiak	60	18.7 ppg	4.8 rpg	3.1 apg	50.8 FG%	45.5 3FG%
PG Troy Hudson	87	11.7 ppg	3.1 apg	0.70 spg	43.4 FG%	35.3 3FG%

BENCH	PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
G Anthony Peeler	191	9.0 ppg	2.5 rpg	2.2 apg	42.1 FG%	39.2 3FG%
F Gary Trent	216	7.5 ppg	4.2 rpg	0.9 apg	0.33 spg	50.7 FG%
G-F Kendall Gill	233	5.7 ppg	2.8 rpg	1.5 apg	0.68 spg	38.4 FG%
C Loren Woods	287	1.8 ppg	2.0 rpg	0.57 bpg	34.4 FG%	73.3 FT%
F-C Marc Jackson	307	4.8 ppg	3.3 rpg	0.28 spg	36.6 FG%	82.5 FT%

New acquisition (R) Rookie (statistics for final college season) *PVR: Player Value Ranking (explanation on page 92)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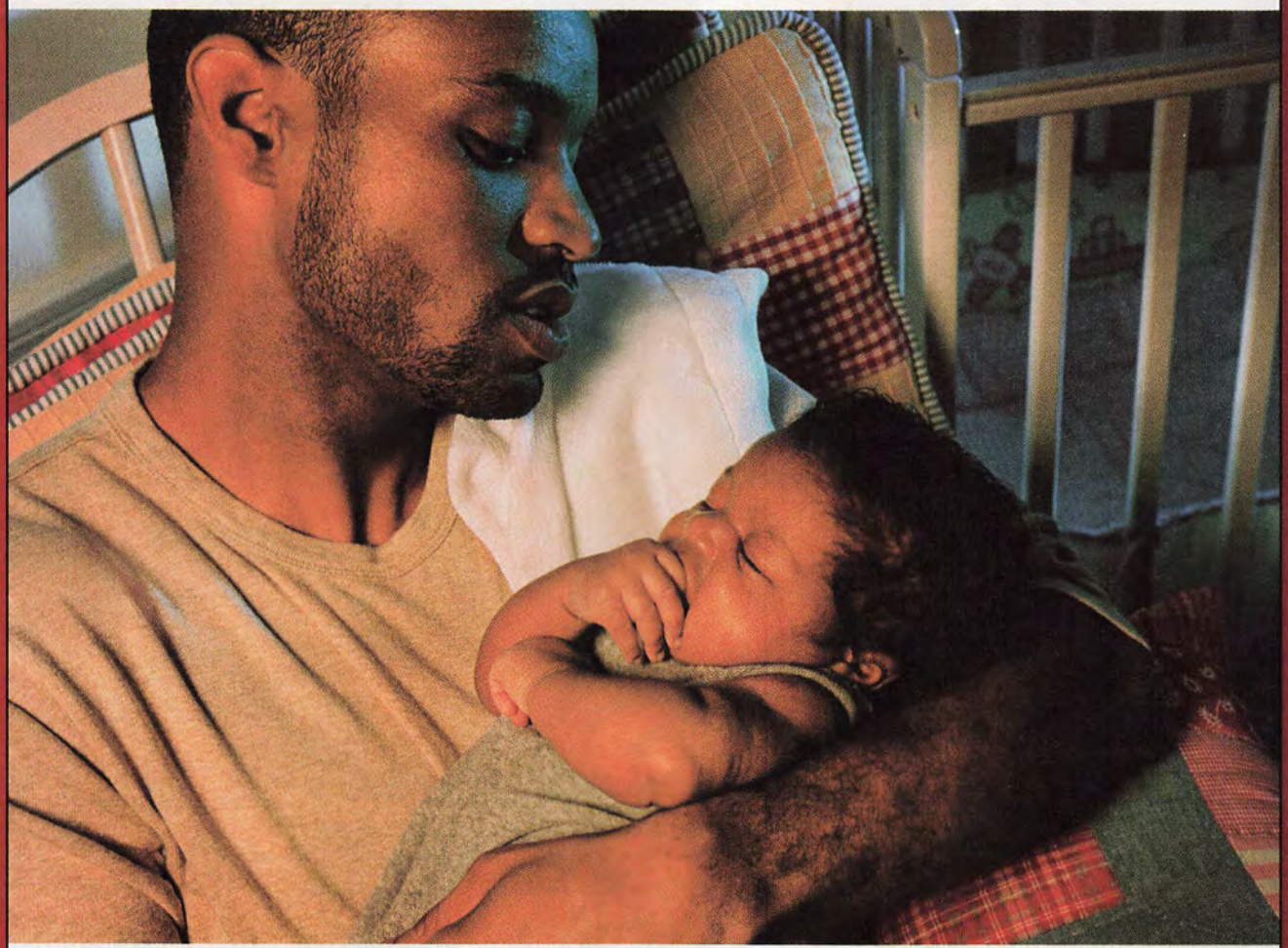

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8

UTAH JAZZ

As the tandem of Karl Malone and John Stockton makes (perhaps) its last stand, the Jazz considers variations on an old theme at shooting guard

FOR YEARS it seemed that almost every Jazz off-guard fit the same mold—a spot-up shooter who could cash in on the open looks he got out of John Stockton and Karl Malone's two-man game. But with Jeff Hornacek retired and his successor, John Starks, unsigned, coach Jerry Sloan is looking at two potential replacements: a kid two years out of high school who plays above the rim (DeShawn Stevenson) and a vet who can barely hit it (Calbert Cheaney, 31, who hasn't made a three-pointer in two seasons). It's as if the Rolling Stones had begun looking for Bill Wyman's replacement by auditioning a teenager from a garage band and a tone-deaf guy.

Stevenson isn't exactly a deadeye from downtown either. He has made three threes in two seasons in Utah, a rate that will enable him to surpass Hornacek's career total of 828 midway through the 2552–53 season. Acutely aware of his shortcomings, Stevenson spent most of his off-season in Los Angeles working with shooting coach John Welch (who has since been hired as a Grizzlies assistant), taking at least 1,000 jumpers a day. "I still want to slash and get on top of the rim, but mostly I'm going to get open shots and knock them down," says the 21-year-old Stevenson. "I'm trying to fit myself into that [traditional]

SHOWTIME Stevenson can play with pizzazz, but Utah has a more mundane need: someone to hit open jumpers.

GLENN JAMES/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES

JOHN W. MCDONOUGH

POINT DRIVEN? Though he's only 3,680 points from the alltime scoring record, Malone has hinted at retirement.

role but also put some of my style into it."

While Stevenson learns to rein in his freelancing, take-it-to-the-hole tendencies, the Jazz hopes he can contribute defensively and on the glass. With Malone turning 40 in July and Stockton already there, Sloan has to see if Stevenson is a player the team can build around when the ageless duo is gone. At the same time, Sloan doesn't want someone who plays as if he has something to prove. Last year the Jazz had eight players in the walk year of their contracts, which led to selfish play and a 44–38 record, Utah's worst in 15 seasons. Memories of that debacle could enhance the appeal of the less individualistic Cheaney, who signed as a free agent after two seasons with the Nuggets. "He's been in team situations before," says Sloan of Cheaney, who played for Bob Knight at Indiana. "That's where he had his most of his success."

With Cheaney, though, the best-case scenario is a dozen points a game. Stevenson has a far greater upside, and after two years alongside two sure Hall of Fame players, he might begin to reveal it. "I feel more like a vet," he says. "I feel more comfortable. I've paid my dues, and it's my time." —*Mark Bechtel*

FAST FACT Andrei Kirilenko last season became the first Jazz player since Karl Malone in 1985–86 to make the All-Rookie first team.

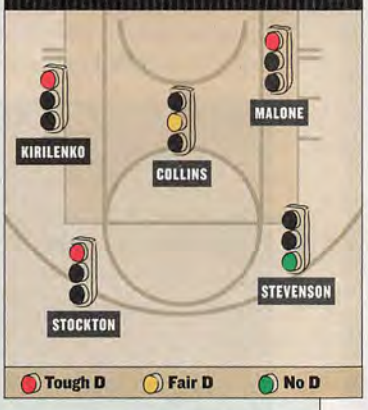
ENEMY LINES an opposing team's scout sizes up the Jazz

"Utah was second in turnovers (16.5 per game) behind Golden State, which was a big surprise because **John Stockton** prides himself on protecting the ball. I saw him forcing passes he used to make easily, which may be because of age or because the guys around him aren't as good. He can still catch and shoot, get in the lane and make a steal, set up the offense and flop to draw a blocking foul, but his drives aren't as effective as they used to be....There's no question the new defensive rules affected the isolation plays and two-man game of Stockton and **Karl Malone** because now you

OSTERTAG DOESN'T WORK ON HIS GAME; HE'S A MISTAKE PLAYER WITH NO TOUGHNESS.

can double-team Malone before he gets the ball.... Malone is showing a drop-off in the paint. When he gets offensive rebounds, his lift back up to the rim isn't what it used to be. He used to power his way inside consistently, but he doesn't want to get hammered every time so he's taking more jump shots.... **Matt Harpring** fits right in with the Jazz. The last couple of years it looked like **Jerry Sloan** was feeling let down by Scott Padgett, Bryon Russell and Donyell Marshall. But with Harpring, Jerry gets to coach somebody who plays the way Jerry played.... Then there is **Greg Ostertag**, who is the polar opposite of everything Jerry believes in. He isn't very serious, he doesn't work on his game, he's a mistake player with no toughness. You see him miss a dunk or lose the ball, and he looks over at the bench with an expression that says, I tried! And Jerry's saying to himself, Give me a bleeping break....If this is the last hurrah for Stockton and Malone, I bet they worked harder this summer so they'll be ready. They've still got the toughness and heart to knock out teams with less desire, which gives them the edge for the last playoff spot."

DEFENSIVE RATINGS



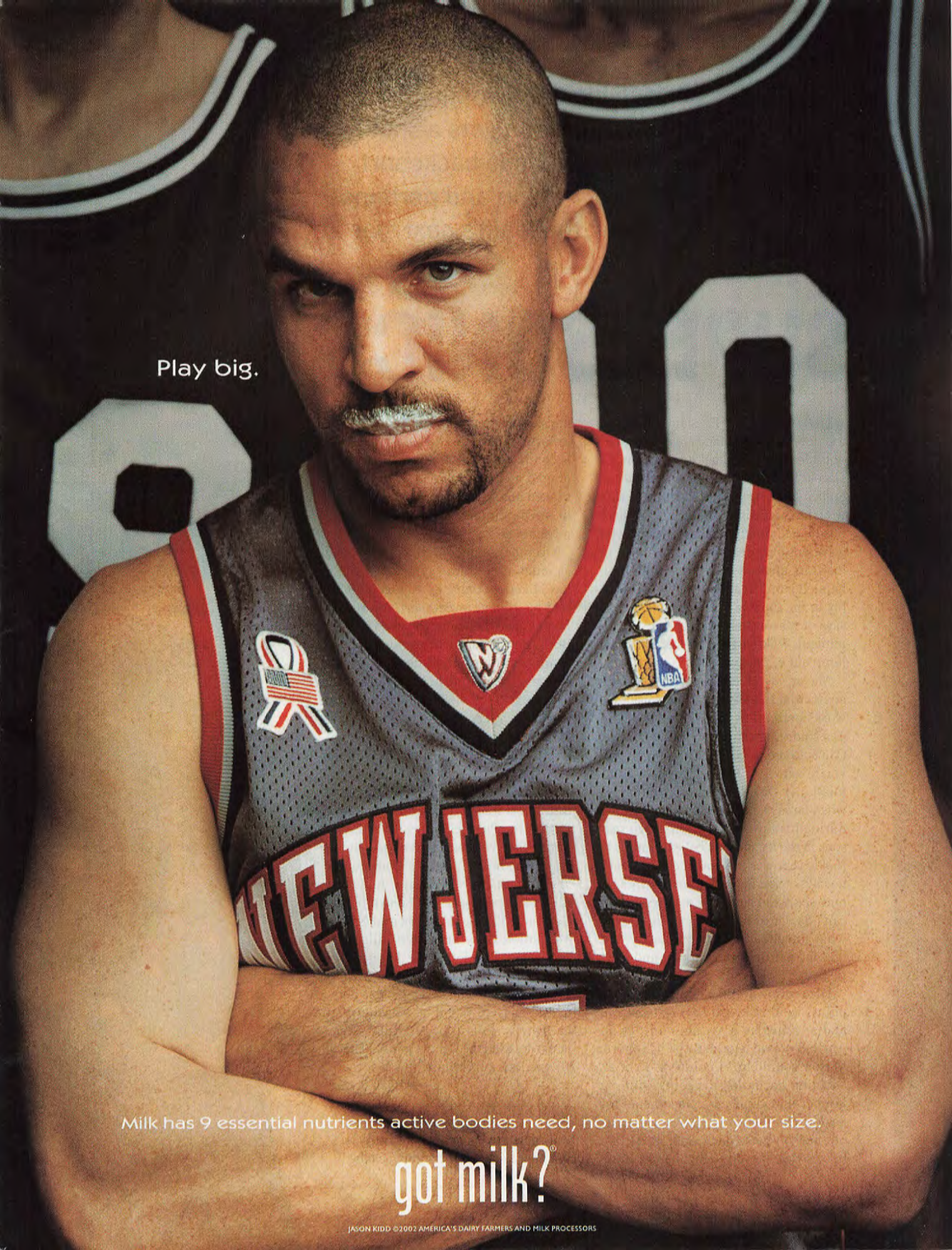
PROJECTED LINEUP

2001–02 record: 44–38 (fourth in Midwest)
Points scored: 96.0 (14th) Points allowed: 95.1 (13th)
Coach: Jerry Sloan (15th season with Jazz)

STARTERS	PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
SF Andrei Kirilenko	59	10.7 ppg	4.9 rpg	1.94 bpg	1.41 spg	45.0 FG%
PF Karl Malone	24	22.4 ppg	8.6 rpg	4.3 apg	1.90 spg	45.4 FG%
C Jarron Collins	165	6.4 ppg	4.2 rpg	0.8 apg	0.31 bpg	46.1 FG%
SG DeShawn Stevenson	154	4.9 ppg	2.0 rpg	1.7 apg	0.43 spg	38.5 FG%
PG John Stockton	56	13.4 ppg	3.2 rpg	8.2 apg	1.85 spg	51.7 FG%

BENCH	PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
G-F Matt Harpring	119	11.8 ppg	7.1 rpg	1.3 apg	0.86 spg	46.1 FG%
G Mark Jackson	235	8.4 ppg	3.8 rpg	7.4 apg	43.9 FG%	40.5 3FG%
G Calbert Cheaney	253	7.3 ppg	3.5 rpg	1.6 apg	0.50 spg	48.1 FG%
C Greg Ostertag	277	3.3 ppg	4.2 rpg	0.7 apg	1.47 spg	45.3 FG%
C Curtis Borchardt (R)	284	16.9 ppg	11.4 rpg	2.0 apg	2.93 bpg	57.6 FG%

New acquisition (R) Rookie (statistics for final college season) *PVR: Player Value Ranking (explanation on page 92)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9

High-flying, hardworking Desmond Mason gets a shot at forming a dynamic backcourt with Gary Payton and perhaps becoming the team's next star

SEATTLE
SUPERSONICS

WINNING THE NBA slam-dunk contest doesn't always mark a player for stardom; for every Michael Jordan there's a Harold Miner. As a rookie two years ago Sonics shooting guard Desmond Mason won the competition by leaping a human hurdle, teammate Rashard Lewis, who was bent over and covered his head in his shirt, en route to a thunderous one-handed jam. "In athleticism he's probably in the top five in the league," Lewis says of Mason. "He reminds me of Dominique Wilkins. He plays hard and can jump out of the gym."

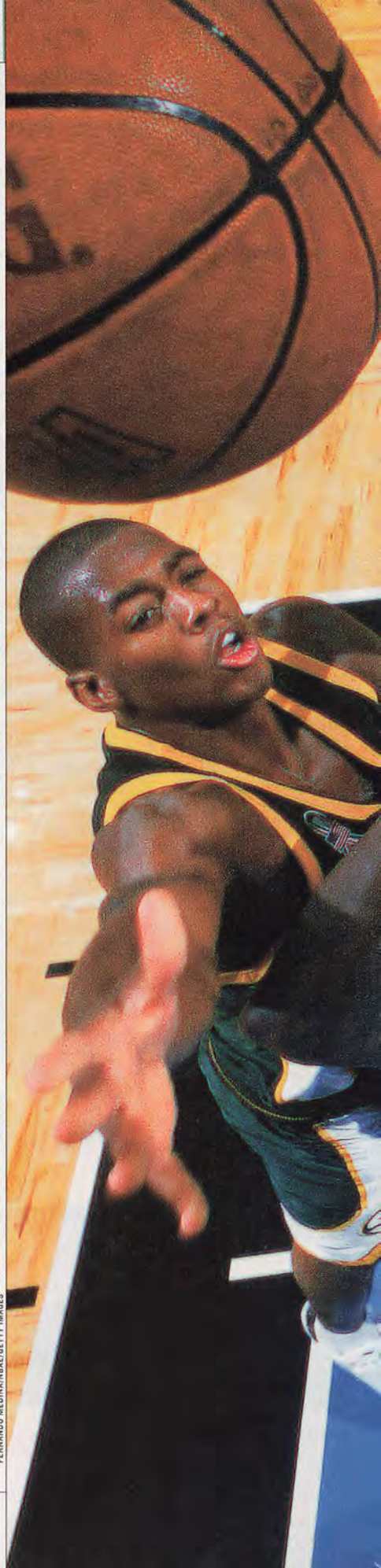
Mason's work ethic is what sets him apart from the Miners of the world. He works hard and studies, just as he did as a studio art major at Oklahoma State. (He sold a charcoal drawing of his favorite actor, Al Pacino, to NBA commissioner David Stern for $2,500.) So when he says that he learned something during his up-and-down first two seasons in the league, you believe him. "My rookie year was kind of an experiment," he says. "You get a feel for your game and see what you can and what you can't do. Once I found that out, I knew what I needed to work on. Last year I became a little better shooter and a little better ball handler."

His scoring average jumped from 5.9 points as a rookie to 12.4 last season, and at times he was dominant. In an April 8 game against the Clippers, Mason poured in 36 points on 16 of 22 shooting, including the game-winning jumper that clinched a playoff spot for Seattle. His ability to take over a game is one reason why coach Nate McMillan hopes Mason eventually unseats starting shooting guard Brent Barry (another former slam-dunk champion), who is coming off a season in which he averaged a career-high 14.4 points and ranked among the top 10 in the league in three-pointers, steals and field goal percentage.

Over the summer Mason didn't spend as much time in the gym as he would have liked, because in August he married his college sweetheart, Andrea, in Hawaii, and then honeymooned in Bora Bora. But it was clear to McMillan in camp that Mason had heeded his advice and found time to improve his ball handling. "I felt developing that would make him a very dangerous player," says McMillan, who even played Mason at point guard during camp. "He looks very sharp."

McMillan is particularly interested to find out if Mason can team with Gary Payton to give the Sonics the one-two punch they will need to compete in the superstar-heavy Western Conference. "For years we've always had two All-Stars here: Gary and Shawn Kemp, Gary and Vin Baker, Gary and Xavier McDaniel, Gary and Dale Ellis," the coach says. "We don't have that now. We have Gary. Which of our young guys is going to emerge and develop into a dominating player? Will it be Mason, will it be Lewis, will it be Vladimir Radmanovic, will it be Jerome James? They'll all have an opportunity."

—Mark Bechtel



ELEVATION Former slam-dunk champ Mason had to come back to earth and improve his ball handling skills.

FERNANDO MEDINA/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES

FAST FACT Brent Barry made more threes last season (164) than any player who has shot better than 50% from the field. (He shot 50.8%.)

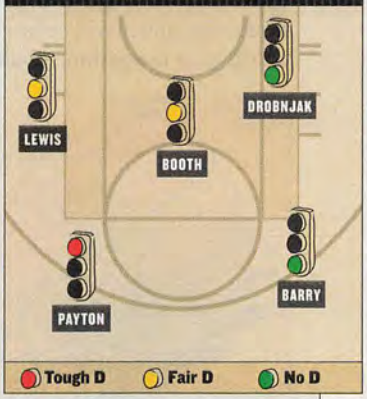
ENEMY LINES an opposing team's scout sizes up the SuperSonics

"With Vin Baker gone they are going to try to clear out the middle to make room for their scorers to run cuts and pick-and-rolls. Trading Baker [to the Celtics] was necessary: There was a bad aura around him that carried over to the other players, plus he demanded the ball and took a lot of time when he got it, which bogged down the offense. But as a big man who can guard fours and fives, he will be missed at the other end of the court. That lack of force might keep Seattle out of the playoffs....Against the bigger teams they'll have to go with **Calvin Booth**'s length or **Predrag Drobnjak**'s bulk at power forward; Booth missed all but

ANDERSON WILL BE A BIG HELP. IT'S BEEN YEARS SINCE THEY'VE HAD A TRUE BACKUP FOR PAYTON.

15 games last year, so they don't even know what they have there. I know they were mad at **Jerome James** for signing a new contract and then showing up in poor shape....They'll be at their best on the nights when they're able to go small with **Vladimir Radmanovic** as a power forward on the perimeter....I wouldn't make too much of **Gary Payton**'s contract demands. No matter what's going on off the court, when the game starts he's yapping at everybody and running the team as always....**Kenny Anderson** will be a surprisingly big help, because it's been years since they've had a true backup to Payton. He should play at least 15 minutes a game and is versatile enough to play shooting guard....**Brent Barry** is a steadying influence. You'll see him bringing the ball up and initiating the offense at times....I see a big improvement in **Desmond Mason**'s confidence, particularly with his jump shot. That might be important, because they've got to be worried about **Rashard Lewis** after he separated his left shoulder last spring and aggravated it again this preseason....**Nate McMillan** is succeeding because he's a calm leader, which is how he was as an NBA point guard. If he says something in a heated moment, his players listen because he does it so rarely."

DEFENSIVE RATINGS



PROJECTED LINEUP

2001-02 record: 45-37 (fourth in Pacific)
Points scored: 97.7 (6th) Points allowed: 94.7 (12th)
Coach: Nate McMillan (third season with Sonics)

STARTERS	PVR*	2001-02 KEY STATS				
SF Rashard Lewis	25	16.8 ppg	7.0 rpg	1.46 spg	46.8 FG%	38.9 3FG%
PF Predrag Drobnjak	223	6.8 ppg	3.4 rpg	0.8 apg	0.48 bpg	46.1 FG%
C Calvin Booth	276	6.2 ppg	3.6 rpg	1.1 apg	0.87 bpg	42.7 FG%
SG Brent Barry	79	14.4 ppg	5.3 rpg	5.4 apg	1.81 spg	50.8 FG%
PG Gary Payton	10	22.1 ppg	4.8 rpg	9.0 apg	1.60 spg	46.7 FG%

BENCH	PVR*	2001-02 KEY STATS				
G-F Desmond Mason	64	12.4 ppg	4.7 rpg	1.4 apg	0.89 spg	46.4 FG%
G Kenny Anderson	128	9.6 ppg	3.6 rpg	5.3 apg	1.86 spg	43.6 FG%
F-C Vladimir Radmanovic	164	6.7 ppg	3.8 rpg	0.92 spg	41.2 FG%	42.0 3FG%
C Jerome James	262	5.3 ppg	4.1 rpg	0.4 apg	1.54 bpg	49.1 FG%
F Ansu Sesay	304	6.4 ppg	2.2 rpg	0.9 apg	0.33 spg	50.0 FG%

New acquisition (R) Rookie (statistics for final college season) *PVR: Player Value Ranking (explanation on page 92)

10

The ever-revolving door brought in Andre Miller, another young star left to wonder: How long can this team keep it together?

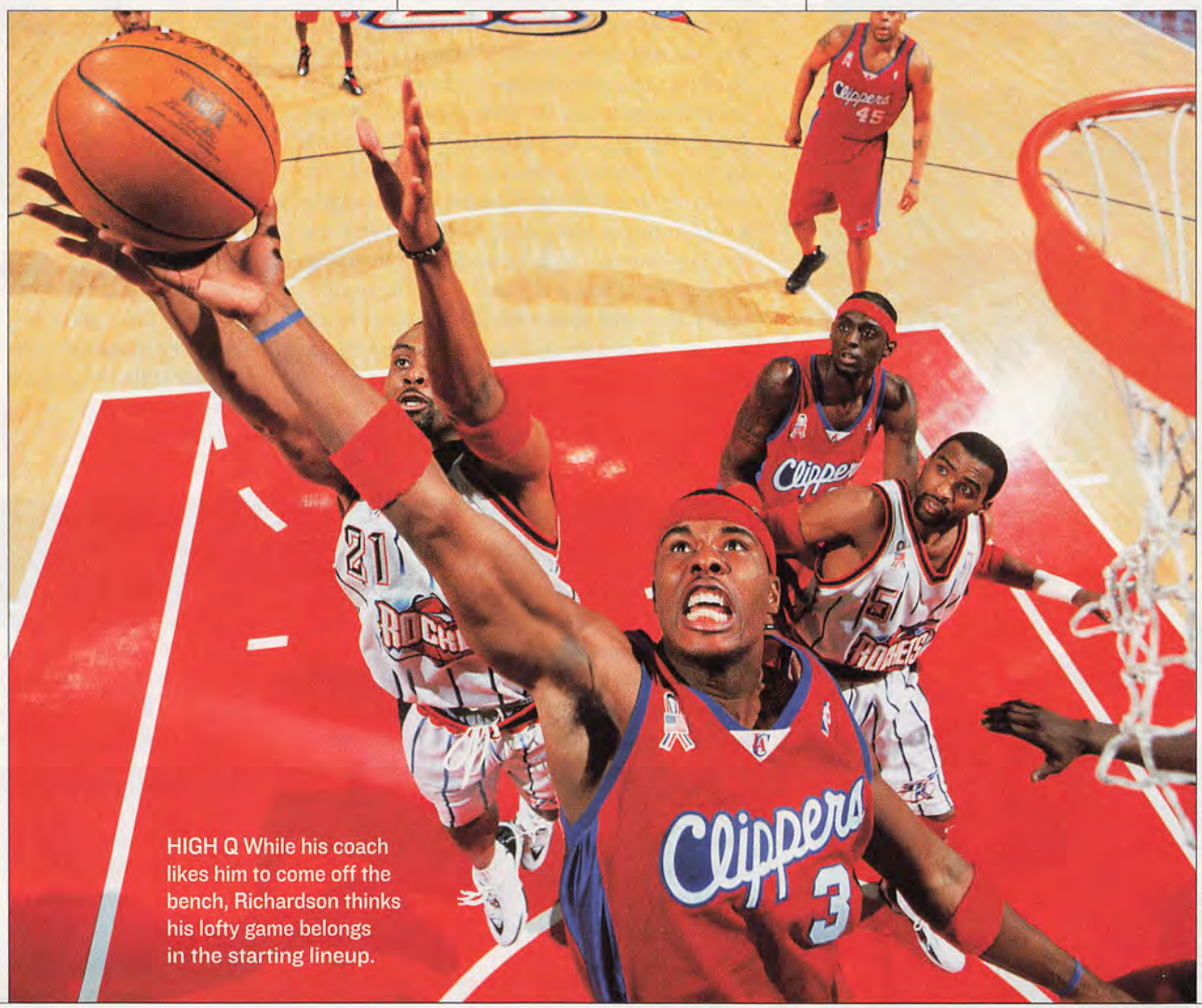
LOS ANGELES CLIPPERS

FEAR NOT, fans of those head-banging brothers of mirth named Quentin Richardson and Darius Miles. Though three time zones will separate them, Q and D plan to continue double-tapping fists to foreheads to punctuate a good play, a ritual the genesis of which they refuse to reveal. "He'll represent on the East," says the Clippers' Richardson of his good bud who was traded in July to the Cavaliers, "and I'll represent on the West."

The 6' 6" Richardson is as good a barometer as any of the Clippers, who could go way up or way down this season. Unpredictable but extremely talented, Head-banger West has issues, not to mention an injury, in his case a sprained right knee, which he twisted during training camp. He remains unhappy that Miles (with whom he talks almost daily) was unloaded, even though the prize was Andre Miller, the NBA's assists leader last season. And though Richardson, 22, acknowledges he was effective as a high-scoring sixth man last season on this nine- or 10-deep team, he wants to be a starter even after small forward Lamar Odom returns from a sprained right ankle next month.

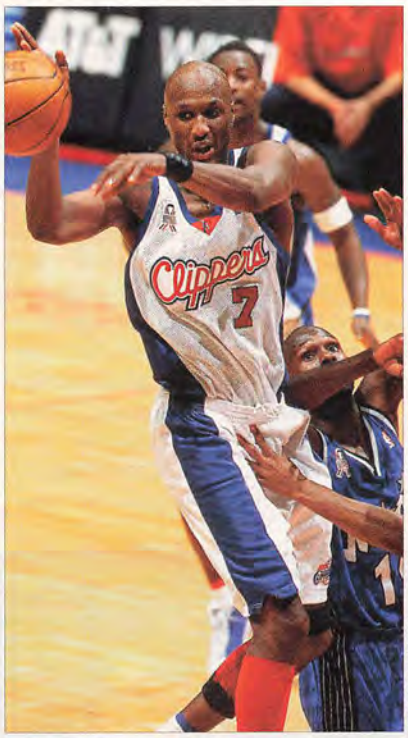
But Q, what if coach Alvin Gentry still wants you to come off the bench?

"I'll be all right with whatever happens," he says, "but I want to start."



HIGH Q While his coach likes him to come off the bench, Richardson thinks his lofty game belongs in the starting lineup.

BILL BAPTIST/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES



JOHN W. MCDONOUGH

BIG O Odom, who will miss the opener with an ankle injury, is one of many Clippers whose status is up in the air.

Such utterances are commonplace in the warped world of Clipperland. Center Michael Olowokandi made great strides in 2001–02—"He was as good a player as there was in the league over the last two months," says Gentry—but he is a disenchanted lame duck, having failed to get a multiyear deal. "All I heard was that this team was going to keep its key people together, build something positive," says the Kandi Man. "That's not what happened with me." As for Odom, no one is sure what to expect, which is nothing new. He shed his crutches last week, and his rehabilitation has been quietly questioned by the Clippers' brass.

Still, there is much positive feeling about the steady Miller. Referring to Miller's predecessor, Jeff McInnis, Q says, "Now our point guard won't lead us in field goal attempts again." And Richardson, despite his desire to start, pledges to do "everything in my power" to make the Clippers into winners, and notes how much he enjoyed jamming with season-ticket holders during an affair at Knott's Berry Farm.

If that type of 'tude prevails, perhaps the Clippers' head-banging will be done exclusively by Richardson. If not, the beleaguered Gentry will join him. —J.M.

FAST FACT Last season Elton Brand became only the fifth player to average 15 points (he had 18.2 per game) and five offensive boards (5.0).

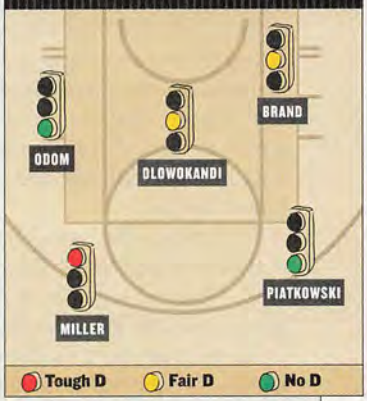
ENEMY LINES an opposing team's scout sizes up the Clippers

"Owner **Donald Sterling** let another summer go by without locking any of his players into long-term deals. This is his one chance to have a really good team, and the fans are showing their support, yet he still refuses to put money into a club that is the envy of every other franchise in the league.... If they were playing for just about any other owner, I'd say these guys are going to make the playoffs. But I doubt that they will because **Michael Olowokandi** is headed out the door as a free agent; **Elton Brand**, **Lamar Odom** and **Andre Miller** become restricted free agents after the season; and **Quentin Richardson**,

AT 24 AND WITH HIS SELFLESSNESS, MILLER SETS AN EXAMPLE OF HOW TO PLAY THE RIGHT WAY.

Corey Maggette and **Keyon Dooling** will be restricted free agents in the summer of 2004. Those players have to assume that Sterling won't re-sign them, so will they work together this season, or will it be every man playing for himself?.... At 24 and with his selflessness, Miller is the right guy to run this team. He sets an example of how to play the right way, and with him in charge they'll execute better late in close games.... I really like **Marko Jaric**, who can play both guard spots and even a little three. He can take it to the basket and finish, but he's going to have to prove that he can hit the jump shot if he wants to be on the court with Miller, who isn't a great shooter either.... Olowokandi isn't close to being a superstar, mainly because he still has a reputation of not bringing it every night. He's going to have to play well this year to earn a big contract.... Every team in the NBA would like to have an athlete like Maggette. He's going to want to have a breakout year, but I don't know if he'll get the minutes to do it.... Brand is their leader and best player, but Odom is their most talented one. Now that they've traded **Darius Miles**, they're going to need Odom's skills to make the playoffs. But with his history of injuries and off-the-court troubles, he's always questionable."

DEFENSIVE RATINGS



PROJECTED LINEUP

2001–02 record: 39–43 (fifth in Pacific)
Points scored: 95.7 (15th) Points allowed: 96.1 (17th)
Coach: Alvin Gentry (third season with Clippers)

STARTERS	PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
SF **Lamar Odom**	71	13.1 ppg	6.1 rpg	5.9 apg	1.24 bpg	41.9 FG%
PF **Elton Brand**	17	18.2 ppg	11.6 rpg	2.4 apg	2.04 bpg	52.7 FG%
C **Michael Olowokandi**	98	11.1 ppg	8.9 rpg	1.1 apg	1.81 bpg	43.3 FG%
SG **Eric Piatkowski**	157	8.8 ppg	2.6 rpg	1.6 apg	43.9 FG%	46.6 3FG%
PG **Andre Miller**	14	16.5 ppg	4.7 rpg	10.9 apg	1.56 spg	45.4 FG%

BENCH	PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
G **Quentin Richardson**	78	13.3 ppg	4.1 rpg	1.6 apg	43.2 FG%	38.1 3FG%
G-F **Marko Jaric (r)**	140	15.2 ppg	4.9 rpg	2.6 apg	45.7 FG%	38.8 3FG%
G **Corey Maggette**	149	11.4 ppg	3.7 rpg	1.8 apg	0.65 spg	44.3 FG%
F **Chris Wilcox (R)**	220	12.0 ppg	7.1 rpg	1.5 apg	1.47 bpg	50.4 FG%
F-C **Wang Zhi-Zhi**	274	5.6 ppg	2.0 rpg	0.4 apg	44.0 FG%	41.4 3FG%

New acquisition

(r) Rookie (statistics from Italian League)
(R) Rookie (statistics for final college season)

*PVR: Player Value Ranking (explanation on page 92)

11

MEMPHIS GRIZZLIES

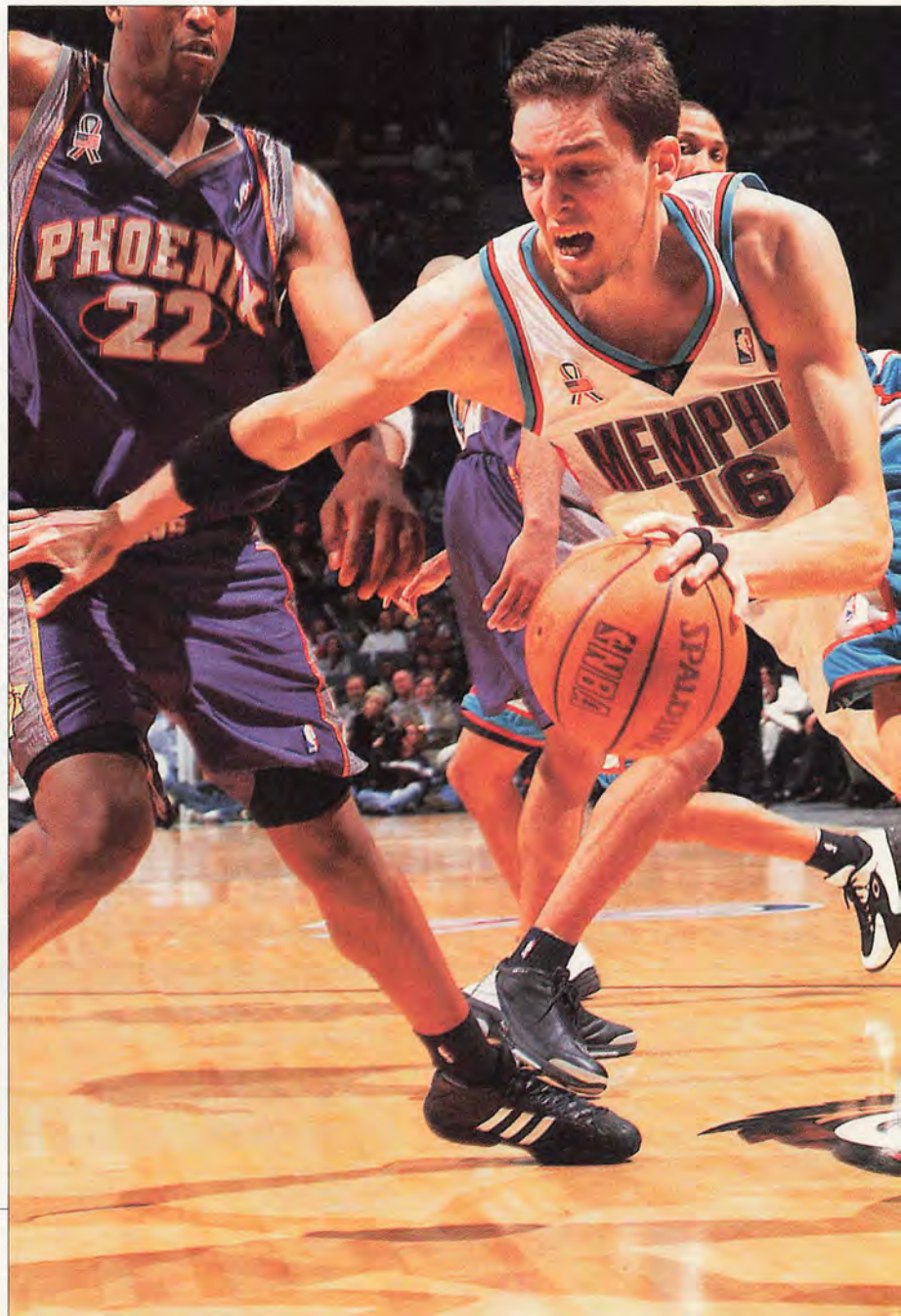
The franchise player here is new boss Jerry West, who is trying to re-create the magic (and Kareem) he possessed with the Lakers

THE COMMERCIAL is set in a grocery store, where a white-haired lady is studying a heap of tomatoes. As she examines and then discards possibilities, a mysterious man appears. Tall and handsome, with Jimmy Johnson hair and a kind smile, he steps in and silently offers up a singularly glorious red orb. This one, he says with his nod, this is the tomato for you.

The mystery man is the Grizzlies' new president of basketball operations, Jerry West. The message: be it produce or power forwards, West can pick a winner. In his 19 years as an executive with the Lakers, West helped construct the foundation of two dynasties. Each time, his blueprint was to draft and/or acquire one or two dominant stars (think Kareem and Magic, Shaq and Kobe) and surround them with hard-working role players. Working in his favor was the sheen of the franchise and the city, with its opportunities for mediocre actors and pedestrian rappers (again, think Shaq and Kobe).

Things are a little different in Graceland. For example, in addition to shooting that commercial, West went on a three-day barnstorming publicity tour with coach Sidney Lowe and other team brass. Tooling around in a Toyota Sequoia, they chugged to NBA outposts such as Jackson, Tenn., and Little Rock, spreading the Grizzly gospel. "It kind of reminded me of when I first started playing in the NBA," says West, sitting courtside at training camp. "We'd play an exhibition game, then get in cars and drive to the next city." He pauses to shout encouragement to a player, then smiles. "Let's just say that I've been asked to do a few things here that I wasn't asked to do in Los Angeles."

Foremost among those is to turn around a franchise that has never won more than 23 games. Though he hasn't pulled off any front-page, above-the-fold trades, he has made several agate-type moves—picking up sharpshooters Wesley Person and Gordan Giricek and signing free agent Earl Watson, among others—that build on what he sees as his foundation: point guard Jason Williams, forward Shane Battier and last year's



PAU-WOW The well-rounded Gasol, last year's best rookie, is one of the cornerstones that West will build on.

rookie of the year, forward Pau Gasol. "We need to have seven or eight players who've played here for three or four years," says West. "After that, we can explore a trade of a bigger magnitude."

His biggest move has been drafting Kansas forward Drew Gooden, who has shown a refined, well-rounded offensive game in preseason. Though he claims not to feel any pressure as the golden child—or ideal tomato, as it may be—Gooden is well aware of the expectations. "I'm just overwhelmed that a guy like Jerry West would have an interest in me," he says.

No doubt, the city of Memphis feels the same way. —C.B.

JOE MURPHY/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES

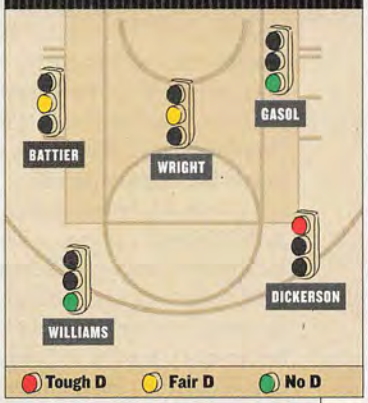
FAST FACT Last season Shane Battier (3,097) and Pau Gasol (3,007) became the first rookie teammates to each log 3,000 minutes.

ENEMY LINES an opposing team's scout sizes up the Grizzlies

"It looks like **Jerry West**'s philosophy is to accumulate as many good players as he can and then make some moves. The strength of the team is forwards **Pau Gasol**, **Shane Battier** and **Drew Gooden**, which is going to make it hard for **Stromile Swift** to earn the minutes he got last year.... Gasol and Gooden should be able to play together, and I can see Battier occasionally shifting to shooting guard to give him more time.... Gasol could play some center, but he'd risk getting into foul trouble and they'd miss **Lorenzen Wright**'s strength on the blocks.... Gooden is a potential All-Star, a double double guy who'll be especially good on the offensive boards. You'll see him playing with intensity and chasing down the extra three or four rebounds, like Dennis Rodman. He is effective scoring around the basket and has a face-up jump shot out to 17 feet.... They added outside shooting with **Wesley Person** and **Gordan Giricek**, a Croatian who has played in a lot of big games in Europe.... **Michael Dickerson** is a very good perimeter shooter with a quick release, and you have to be out on him as he catches the ball. He gives them stability because he doesn't make mistakes. With him and Person coming off staggered screens, you're going to have to chase them and play defense for the full 24 seconds.... They should have a good transition game with the rebounding of Gasol and Gooden, but you can hurt them by picking up **Jason Williams** early and pressuring him into the poor decisions he's still capable of making.... Williams also hurts them at the other end. Team defense begins with keeping the ball out of the middle, and Williams isn't good at it.... They only have two home games against nonplayoff teams in the first month—if **Sidney Lowe** gets in trouble, there's going to be speculation that assistant **Lionel Hollins** will replace him."

GOODEN IS A DOUBLE DOUBLE GUY WHO'LL BE ESPECIALLY GOOD ON THE OFFENSIVE BOARDS.

DEFENSIVE RATINGS



PROJECTED LINEUP

2001–02 record: 23–59 (seventh place in Midwest)
Points scored: 89.9 (27th) Points allowed: 97.3 (21st)
Coach: Sidney Lowe (third season with Grizzlies)

STARTERS	PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
SF Shane Battier	67	14.4 ppg	5.4 rpg	2.8 apg	1.55 spg	42.9 FG%
PF Pau Gasol	29	17.6 ppg	8.9 rpg	2.7 apg	2.06 bpg	51.8 FG%
C Lorenzen Wright	142	12.0 ppg	9.4 rpg	1.0 apg	0.53 bpg	45.9 FG%
SG Michael Dickerson	111	10.8 ppg	2.3 apg	0.75 spg	31.3 FG%	38.1 3FG%
PG Jason Williams	90	14.8 ppg	8.0 apg	1.71 spg	38.2 FG%	29.5 3FG%

BENCH	PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
G Wesley Person	94	15.1 ppg	3.8 rpg	0.99 spg	49.5 FG%	44.4 3FG%
F Drew Gooden (R)	97	19.8 ppg	11.4 rpg	2.0 apg	1.41 bpg	50.4 FG%
F Stromile Swift	166	11.8 ppg	6.3 rpg	1.66 bpg	0.78 spg	48.0 FG%
G Brevin Knight	174	7.0 ppg	2.1 rpg	5.7 apg	1.49 spg	42.2 FG%
G Gordan Giricek (r)	252	16.8 ppg	3.9 rpg	1.4 apg	46.4 FG%	36.8 3FG%

New acquisition

(R) Rookie (statistics for final college season)
(r) Rookie (statistics from Croatian League)

*PVR: Player Value Ranking (explanation on page 92)

WESTERN CONFERENCE

PACIFIC

12

PHOENIX SUNS

Just as fate brought them together last season, Johnson and Johnson are linked in the team's drive to regain its playoff form

FRANK JOHNSON doesn't like the word rebuilding. "We're not rebuilding," the Suns coach says, "but we're certainly retooling." Call it what you like, but with Phoenix having missed the playoffs for the first time since 1988, and big-name, big-dollar veterans Penny Hardaway and Tom Gugliotta in decline, the team is definitely looking to upgrade.

The most intriguing tool is a Swiss Army knife of a player, shooting guard Joe Johnson, who possesses skills—a nice shot, tough defense—that aren't always apparent. He was drafted No. 10 out of Arkansas by Boston in 2001 and got off to a good start, averaging 14 points in his first seven games. But he quickly cooled off and soon was buried on the bench. In mid-February the Celtics shipped him to the Suns for Tony Delk and Rodney Rogers.

Starting over just as he was getting used to living in Boston was tough—"It was scary," Johnson the player, 21, says. "I didn't feel like I knew what to do"—but leaving a conference contender for a lottery-bound team turned out to be the best thing that could have happened to him. Frank Johnson, who had replaced Scott Skiles as coach three days before the trade, quickly made it clear he was going to give the newcomer a chance, by handing him Hardaway's starting spot at shooting guard.

As he showed with the Celtics, Johnson didn't always bring his best game and was an inconsistent performer with the Suns as well. "Against some of the guys who have reputations as being good two guards, he really pushed himself," says his coach, "but when he thought it was a lesser opponent, he didn't come with that same intensity. He got embarrassed by the guys he perceived were lesser opponents, because in this league there are no lesser opponents."

Frank Johnson had nothing but praise for his 6' 7" guard's work ethic over the summer. Joe Johnson played in two summer leagues and worked with a personal trainer to become quicker. He grew up admiring Magic Johnson, so naturally he wants to run the Phoenix offense. "I played a lot of point over the summer," he says. "I love it. I can guard smaller guards; I just feel like I need a little more speed." He did play some point last year, and his boss has no qualms about using him there at times this season.

That would create an opportunity for Hardaway (who has four years left on a seven-year, $86 million contract) to come off the bench, where he and Gugliotta (two years left on a six-year $58 million deal) give the team one of the league's highest-paid and least-tradable reserve tandems. "Penny's at peace now with whatever decision is made," says Frank Johnson. "I think he struggled with it last year. He wasn't happy; he was being blamed for the way we were playing, and that wasn't the case at all. We were just going in a new direction."

A new direction, yes, but with youth on the floor and experience on the sideline eating up cap space, it may be a while before the Suns are retooled and headed back to the postseason. —*Mark Bechtel*

FERNANDO MEDINA/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES

NEW PENNY On the strength of his all-around game, Joe Johnson, 21, has supplanted Hardaway at shooting guard.

FAST FACT The 2001–02 Suns set an NBA record with just 19.9 free throws per game; Seattle's 20.4 in '01–02 was second-lowest alltime.

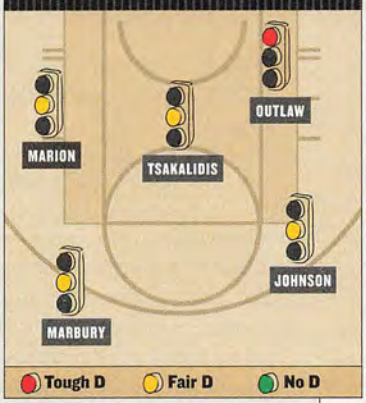
ENEMY LINES an opposing team's scout sizes up the Suns

"I can see them moving **Stephon Marbury** to shooting guard and having **Penny Hardaway** handle the point. Marbury did a better job of trying to involve his teammates last year, but it doesn't come naturally to him. You know you're in trouble when your point guard is taking a lot of bad shots, and Marbury still does—though he has improved his field goal percentage every year he's been in the league.... I feel for **Frank Johnson** trying to coach a backcourt of Hardaway and Marbury. It would be hard enough having one of them, but having to deal with both of their egos is going to cause a lot of headaches....

YOU'RE IN TROUBLE WHEN YOUR POINT GUARD IS TAKING BAD SHOTS, AND MARBURY STILL DOES.

The Celtics questioned **Joe Johnson**'s work ethic when they traded him last February, but supposedly he got serious this summer. The Suns have been trying to develop him as a backup point guard, but I don't see it....Marbury, Johnson, **Shawn Marion** and **Jake Tsakalidis** all have the tools to be much better defensive players. Tsakalidis should try to average a double double this year, but he still looks mechanical and doesn't know how to use his strength.... **Amare Stoudemire** was an intriguing pick out of high school. He's not highly skilled, but he's bigger than Kenyon Martin, and if he's willing to defend and rebound, he could help this year....The Suns were 26th in three-point shooting last year, which is why they drafted **Casey Jacobsen**....**Tom Gugliotta** has averaged fewer than 50 games the past five years, and it shows—he's not explosive anymore.... You have to question some of their recent decisions. They give away Jason Kidd and Cliff Robinson because they want good citizens, then they put the team in Marbury's hands. They say they need a disciplinarian like Scott Skiles, then they fire him and go with Frank Johnson, who's player-friendly. It looks like they're not sure what they want."

DEFENSIVE RATINGS



PROJECTED LINEUP

2001–02 record: 36–46 (sixth in Pacific)
Points scored: 95.1 (17th) Points allowed: 95.8 (15th)
Coach: Frank Johnson (second season with Suns)

STARTERS	PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
SF **Shawn Marion**	26	19.1 ppg	9.9 rpg	1.84 spg	1.06 bpg	46.9 FG%
PF **Bo Outlaw**	215	4.5 ppg	4.4 rpg	1.5 apg	1.11 bpg	42.2 FG%
C **Jake Tsakalidis**	180	7.3 ppg	5.6 rpg	1.03 bpg	47.5 FG%	69.8 FT%
SG **Joe Johnson**	143	7.5 ppg	3.3 rpg	2.3 apg	0.77 spg	43.0 FG%
PG **Stephon Marbury**	36	20.4 ppg	8.1 apg	0.94 spg	44.2 FG%	28.6 3FG%

BENCH	PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
G-F **Anfernee Hardaway**	123	12.0 ppg	4.4 rpg	4.1 apg	1.53 spg	41.8 FG%
F **Amare Stoudemire (r)**	151	29.1 ppg	15 rpg	6.1 bpg	2.1 spg	65.0 FG%
F **Tom Gugliotta**	249	6.5 ppg	5.0 rpg	1.8 apg	0.89 spg	42.2 FG%
G-F **Casey Jacobsen (R)**	255	21.9 ppg	4.5 rpg	3.5 apg	44.1 FG%	37.2 3FG%
F-C **Scott Williams**	303	4.9 ppg	5.1 rpg	0.3 apg	0.80 bpg	39.6 FG%

New acquisition

(r) Rookie (statistics for final high school season)
(R) Rookie (statistics for final college season)

*PVR: Player Value Ranking (explanation on page 92)

13

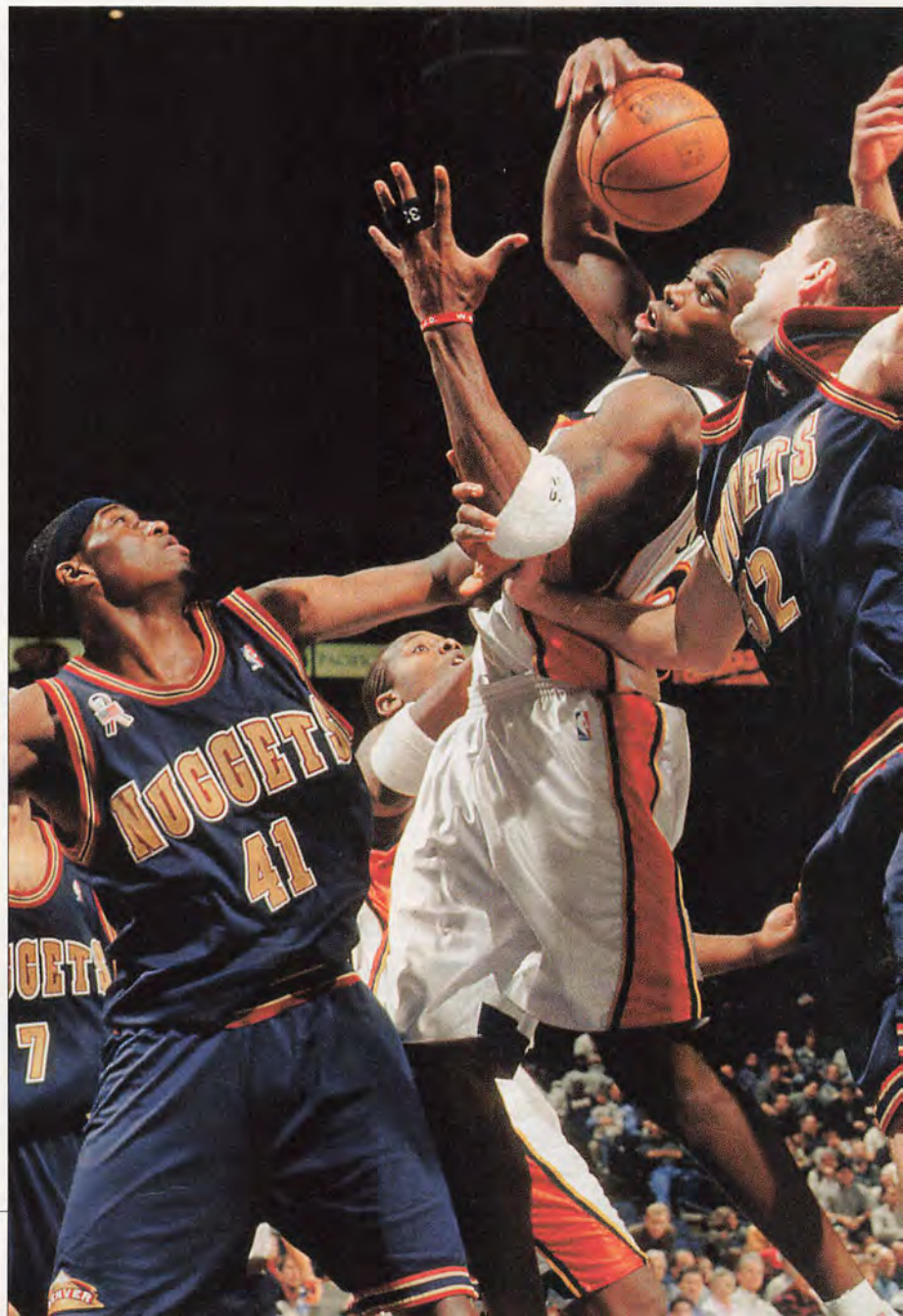
GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS

An enthusiastic rookie coach is loaded with fresh ideas. It's just that he lacks the on-court talent to execute them

THIRTY YEARS AGO seven-year-old Eric Musselman completed a pregame dribbling performance before 20,000 fans at the University of Minnesota, where his father, Bill, was the coach. Then he wet his pants. The task now facing Eric, who in July was named the Warriors' sixth coach in as many years, is no less of a challenge to his self-control. "We're a work in progress," says Musselman, a rookie whose roster includes nine players 26 and younger. Any progress would distinguish this team from recent ones at Golden State; the franchise hasn't qualified for the playoffs in eight seasons, currently the longest such streak in the NBA.

Much progress will be expected from forward Antawn Jamison, who signed a six-year, $87 million extension in August 2001. The 6' 9" Jamison is inconsistent and defensively deficient, and his on-court role isn't even clearly defined: He will jitterbug between the forward positions as Musselman sorts through a grab bag of rookie small forward Mike Dunleavy Jr. and power forwards Danny Fortson and Troy Murphy. Concerned that he would be odd man out, Fortson accused Jamison of having orchestrated the choice of Dunleavy with the No. 3 draft pick, an absurd charge because Jamison doesn't have that much clout.

Fortson later apologized, and everyone around the Warriors—including Fortson, and especially Jamison—has been drawn in by Musselman's contagious enthusiasm, which has earned him comparisons to another boyish gung ho coach, Jon Gruden, who was popular in the Bay Area until he left the Oakland Raiders for Tampa Bay. Musselman's late father, who between college and the pros had 14 head coaching jobs in 35 years, was a legend for his competitiveness and Marine-like work ethic, and the son has a lot of both. "He coaches us like we're a championship team, not a team of losers," says Jamison. Over the summer Musselman, who was an assistant with the Hawks last season, mailed questionnaires to his players, asking what their favorite shot is and where they like to get the ball. He discovered, for example, that although most players prefer to post up on the left block, shoot-



MR. IN BETWEEN Though the Warriors pay Jamison to be their star, they still haven't figured out his position.

ing guard Jason Richardson likes the right, so the coach tweaked some of his sets to accommodate him.

There's much more tweaking to be done. Golden State is young, deeply flawed defensively and prone to sloppiness on offense. Jamison, who scored back-to-back 51s in 2000–01, is on the spot. "The question mark about me is not whether I can produce offensively," says Jamison, 26. "The question is whether I can lead a team, make a winner out of a loser."

And the answer is? "I'm trying my damnedest," he says. "Having Coach Musselman is going to help, but it's still going to take time." —J.M.

ROCKY WIDNER/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES

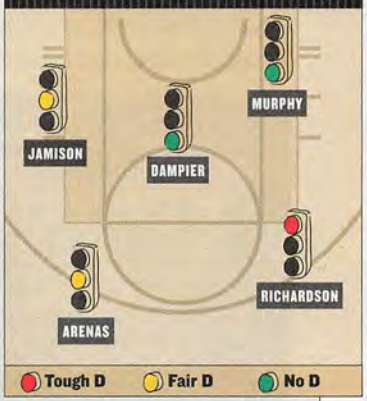
FAST FACT The Warriors were the only team in the bottom five last year in field goal (42.9%), free throw (72.2%) and three-point (32.2%) shooting.

ENEMY LINES an opposing team's scout sizes up the Warriors

"If they'd had any luck in the lottery, they would have gotten the first or second pick and used it to address one of their major weaknesses—point guard and center.... They got forward **Mike Dunleavy** [at No. 3] and then guard **Jiri Welsch** [No. 16], who instantly became their best playmakers. Dunleavy looks thin, but he's going to be a good pro. He's versatile, understands team play and can pump fake, put it on the floor and finish with that beautiful stroke. Still, I think he'll have a harder adjustment than Welsch, who's played professionally in Europe and could eventually be their point guard.... They were terrible in close games because of their shooting. They didn't have one guy who hit more than 80 percent of his free throws.... I was surprised they didn't go after a veteran who could provide leadership. Other than **Chris Mills**, who's fighting injuries, there's no one for their young players to look up to. They look like they're running more motion to create an unselfish atmosphere.... I bet **Eric Musselman** is devoting himself to breaking **Antawn Jamison** of some bad habits, like standing on the three-point line when he should be slashing inside. Jamison's still a young player who could thrive in a team atmosphere, but his maximum contract is going to cause problems because your max players need to be your best players. On a good team Jamison would really be your number 3 player.... **Jason Richardson** shows signs of becoming a superstar. He and Welsch could play together in the backcourt, with Richardson guarding the quicker guy.... The Warriors need **Troy Murphy** to become their best big man, because he's a tough guy who can make shots. The other big guys—**Erick Dampier**, **Adonal Foyle** and **Danny Fortson**, who I hear is being shopped—should all be backups, because they're not good defenders or shooters and they foul too much."

DUNLEAVY CAN PUMP FAKE, PUT IT ON THE FLOOR AND FINISH WITH THAT BEAUTIFUL STROKE.

DEFENSIVE RATINGS



PROJECTED LINEUP

2001–02 record: 21–61 (seventh in Pacific)
Points scored: 97.7 (7th) Points allowed: 103.1 (29th)
Coach: Eric Musselman (first season with Warriors)

STARTERS	PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
SF Antawn Jamison	18	19.7 ppg	6.8 rpg	2.0 apg	0.85 spg	44.7 FG%
PF Troy Murphy	116	5.9 ppg	3.9 rpg	0.9 apg	0.44 spg	42.1 FG%
C Erick Dampier	178	7.6 ppg	5.3 rpg	1.2 apg	2.29 bpg	43.5 FG%
SG Jason Richardson	63	14.4 ppg	4.3 rpg	3.0 apg	1.33 spg	41.7 FG%
PG Gilbert Arenas	108	10.9 ppg	2.8 rpg	3.7 apg	1.47 spg	45.3 FG%

BENCH	PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
F Mike Dunleavy Jr. (R)	122	17.3 ppg	7.2 rpg	2.1 apg	2.29 spg	48.3 FG%
G Bobby Sura	210	10.0 ppg	3.3 rpg	3.5 apg	1.13 spg	42.4 FG%
G Jiri Welsch (r)	225	15.7 ppg	2.7 rpg	1.9 apg	56.8 FG%	35.6 3FG%
F Danny Fortson	238	11.2 ppg	11.7 rpg	1.6 apg	0.57 spg	42.8 FG%
C Adonal Foyle	241	4.8 ppg	4.9 rpg	2.13 bpg	44.4 FG%	39.8 FT%

New acquisition

(R) Rookie (statistics for final college season)
(r) Rookie (statistics from Slovenian League)

*PVR: Player Value Ranking (explanation on page 92)

14

DENVER NUGGETS

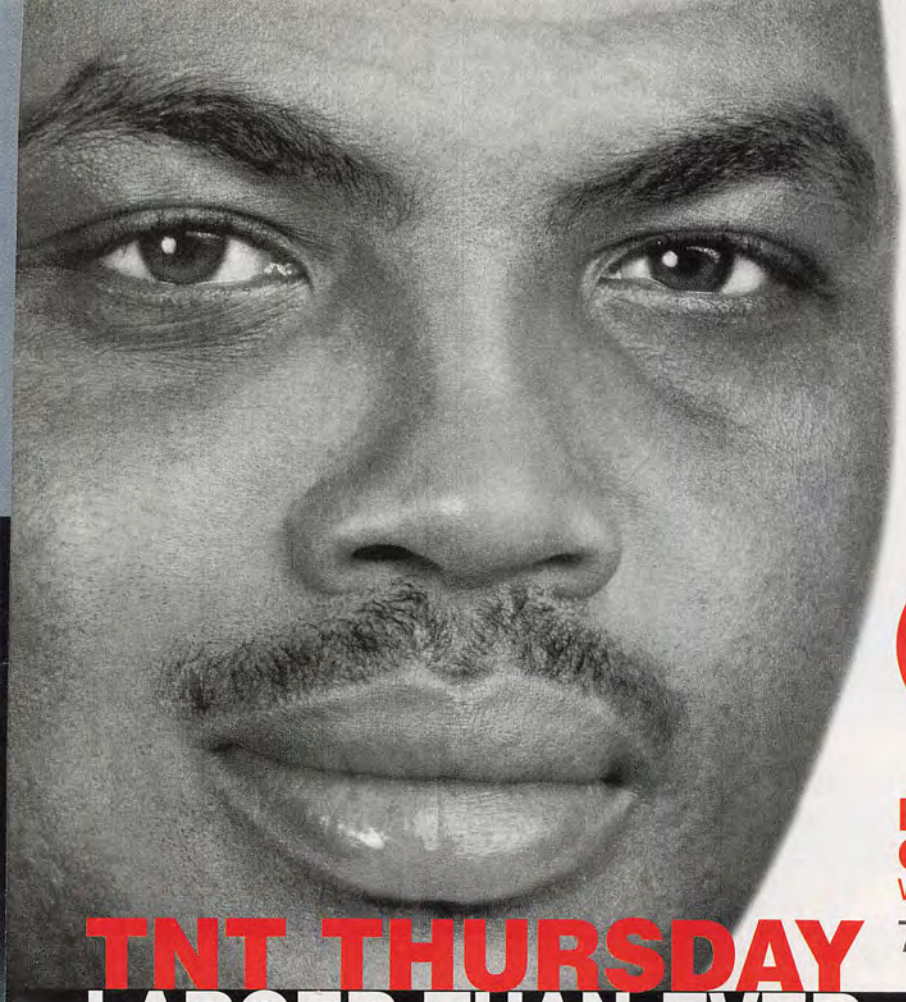
A massage room, yoga lessons, a new coach and a lot of tall, young talent won't be enough to avoid another miserable year

KIKI VANDEWEGHE is not your typical general manager. He's taught the Nuggets the finer points of footwork. He's rebuilt the Pepsi Center weight room, enlarged the locker room, converted offices into a massage room and a video theater, and is installing a players' lounge to encourage socializing among his young troops. The players' summer workouts included lessons in proper running technique from a track coach as well as instruction in yoga and martial arts.

A former NBA forward who took over as G.M. in August 2001, Vandeweghe is not afraid to try new things, which explains the makeup of the roster and his choice of a new coach. Recognizing there were no quick fixes, he brought in big raw talent and a rookie coach, Jeff Bzdelik (buzz-DEL-ik) to shape the Nuggets into a high-energy, defensive-minded team. According to 6' 11" center Marcus Camby, who was acquired in an offseason trade with the Knicks, Bzdelik, 49, has much in common with fellow Pat Riley disciple Jeff Van Gundy, the former New York coach. "A lot of the plays are the same as we had with the Knicks, and the practices are just as tough," says Camby, who last week underwent surgery to repair torn hip cartilage. "But this Jeff is a lot more approachable than the Jeff in New York."

ADDED VALUE Howard (middle) will provide leadership for now, then $20.6 million in cap room after his contract expires.

GREG NELSON



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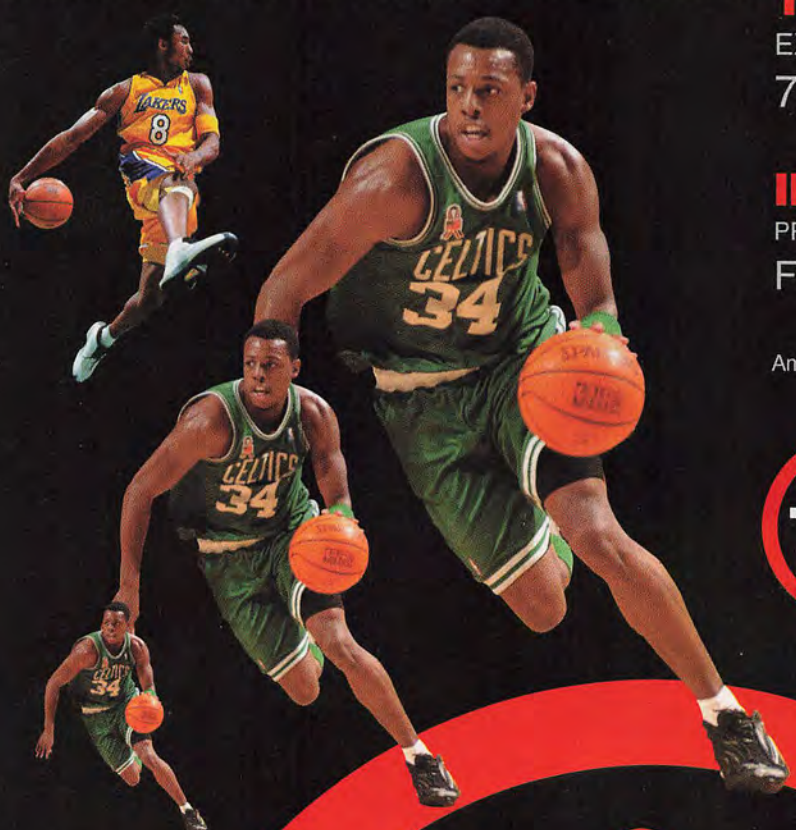

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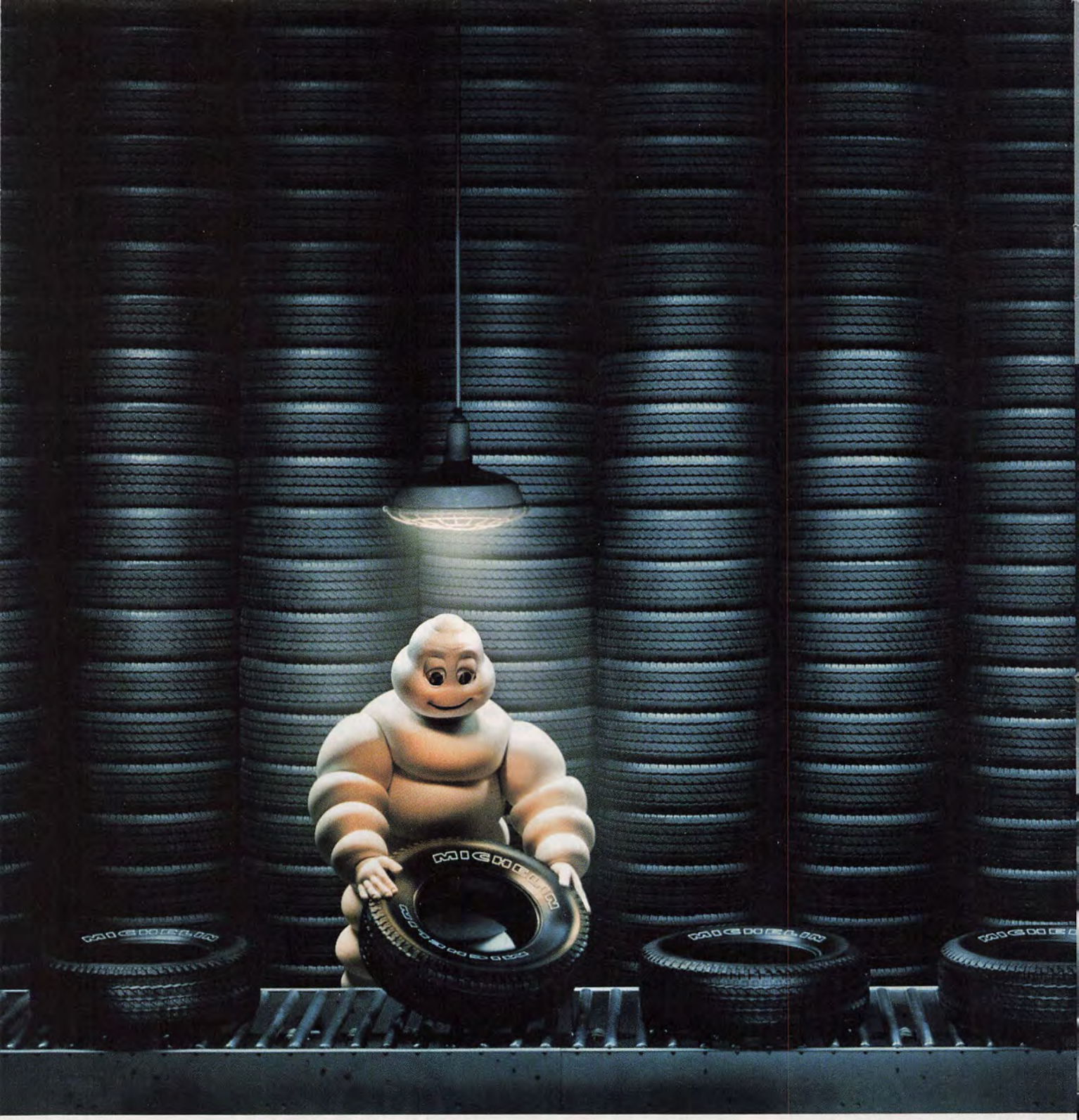

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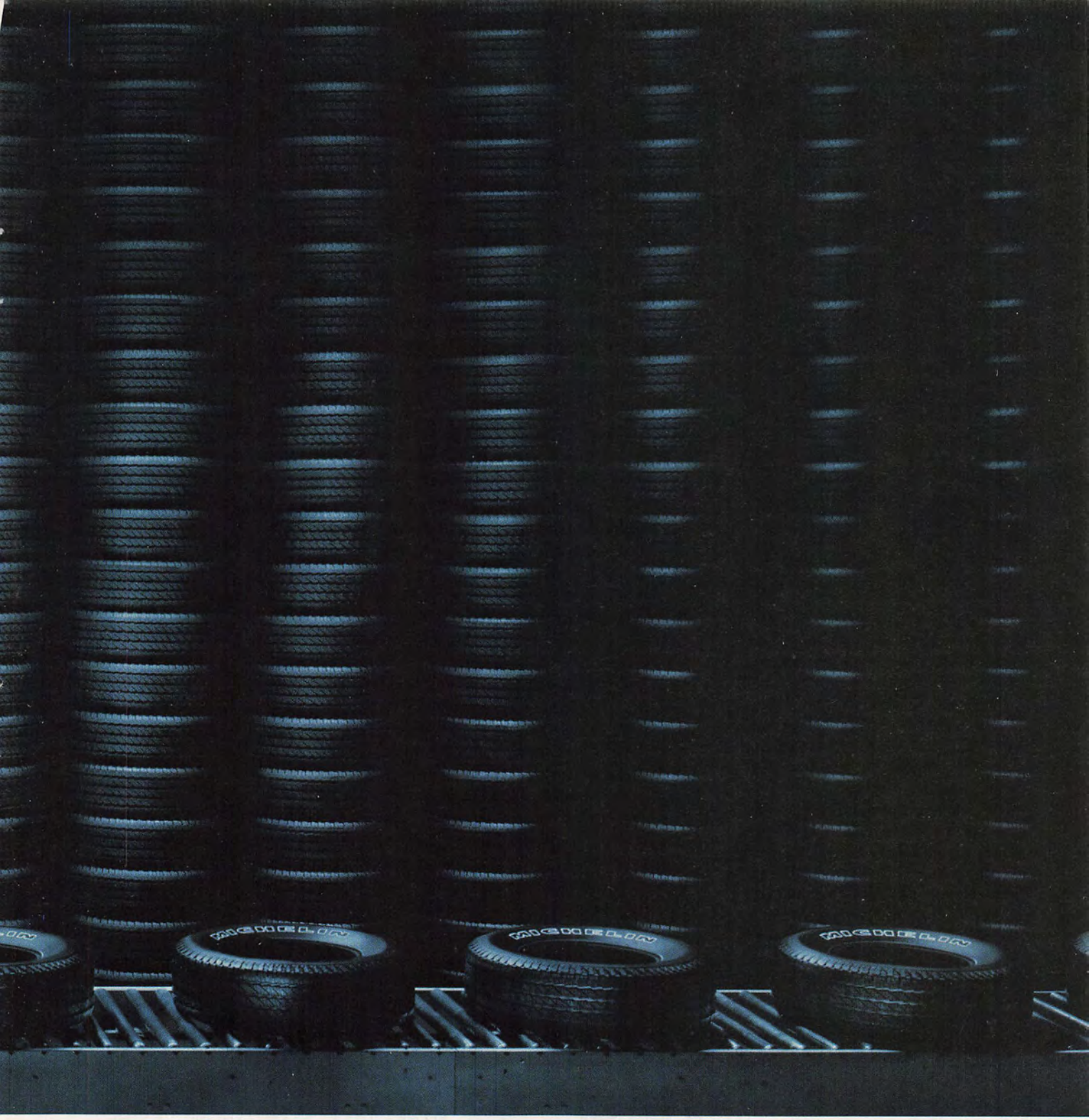

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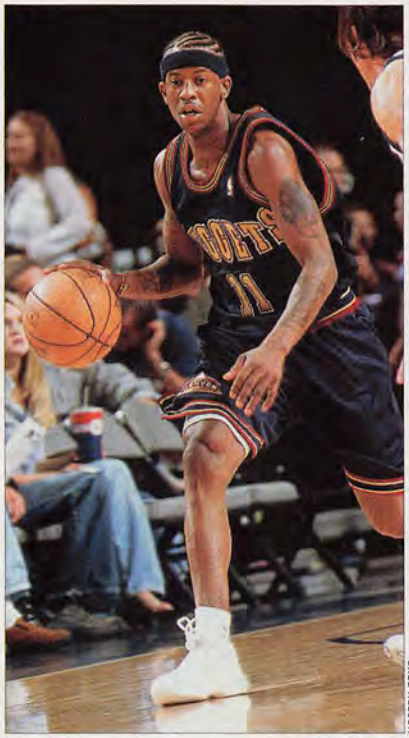


GREG NELSON

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS The best of an unproven batch of points, Satterfield will get to show he can run the show.

Camby will be out at least until January, but the frontcourt is loaded with lottery picks: 7-foot Nikoloz Tskitishvili, 19; 6' 11" Nene Hilario, 20; and 6' 9" Rodney White, 22, a 2001 selection by the Pistons. Reinforcements are expected to arrive next summer, when Denver has the cap room to sign a free agent or two after the contract of 29-year-old forward Juwan Howard ($20.6 million this year) expires. As Howard, the only Nugget to average more than 11 points last year, puts it, "The challenge for us is to keep working and not get caught up in wins and losses."

While Vandeweghe promises long-suffering Denver fans that they'll see "the hardest-working team in the NBA," some deficiencies can't be overcome with effort alone. The Nuggets went into training camp with the league's weakest crop of point guards in 21-year-old Kenny Satterfield, the 54th pick in the '01 draft, who has played in only 36 NBA games, and undrafted rookie Lorinza Harrington of Division II Wingate (N.C.) University. "I know that what we're doing here is going to work someday," says Bzdelik, "and hopefully I'll be here to see it when it does." —I.T.

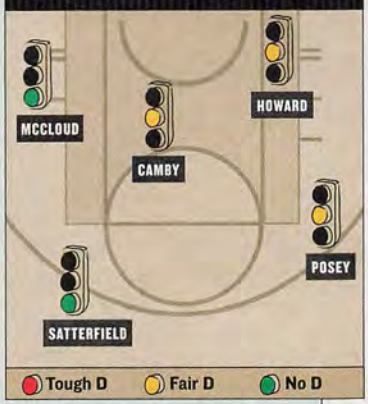
FAST FACT Last season 560 of the field goals attempted by the Nuggets were blocked, the most since the Nets were rejected 582 times in '93–94.

ENEMY LINES an opposing team's scout sizes up the Nuggets

"They would struggle in the SEC. With a competent point guard, they could win 20 to 25 games; if they stick with what they've got, they're looking at 15 to 20. They seem to like **Kenny Satterfield**—I think he's a bad decision-maker who loves to shoot but can't. I'd go with rookie **Lorinza Harrington**, who has a little Alvin Williams in him and could be a second point guard on some teams.... It's a tough spot for **Juwan Howard**, who spent a little time with a good team in Dallas before he was shipped here, but I've never seen him put forth less than a good effort.... They need scoring from **George McCloud** and **James Posey**. The problem with Posey is that he only knows what it's like to lose 50 games a year. If you spend your career losing like that, it's hard not to develop losing habits.... They'll pick up full-court and try to scramble the game. It's their only hope, because I can't find one good defender on the roster. They have no inside presence and no shot blockers.... **Rodney White** made some good plays in preseason and could be a surprise. He was probably the most talented guy in the 2001 draft, but he had red flags everywhere.... Their foreign rookies are not ready. **Nene Hilario** struggles to get a shot off because he doesn't have any post moves, but at least he's big and strong. **Nikoloz Tskitishvili** is not in the class of Dirk Nowitzki or Pau Gasol, but he doesn't have as much experience as those guys did when they came to the league. He's going to be lost on defense, and he'll get pushed around.... Nonetheless, this is a great chance for **Jeff Bzdelik**. It helps that his lead assistant is **John MacLeod**, who coached winners and losers and can provide perspective. In the preseason the Nuggets came onto the court with their shirts tucked in and their pants tied, and they played tough defense, like a Pat Riley team. They'll steal a few wins from teams that don't come ready to play."

IT'S A TOUGH SPOT FOR HOWARD, BUT I'VE NEVER SEEN HIM PUT FORTH LESS THAN A GOOD EFFORT.

DEFENSIVE RATINGS



PROJECTED LINEUP

2001–02 record: 27–55 (sixth place in Midwest)
Points scored: 92.2 (23rd) Points allowed: 98.0 (24th)
Coach: Jeff Bzdelik (first season with Nuggets)

STARTERS		PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
SF	George McCloud	139	8.8 ppg	3.6 rpg	3.0 apg	0.84 spg	35.8 FG%
PF	Juwan Howard	61	14.6 ppg	7.6 rpg	2.1 apg	0.58 bpg	46.0 FG%
C	Marcus Camby	124	11.1 ppg	11.1 rpg	1.72 bpg	1.17 spg	44.8 FG%
SG	James Posey	135	10.7 ppg	5.9 rpg	2.5 apg	1.56 spg	37.6 FG%
PG	Kenny Satterfield	190	5.3 ppg	3.0 apg	0.86 spg	36.7 FG%	25.9 3FG%

BENCH		PVR*	2001–02 KEY STATS				
F	Nikoloz Tskitishvili (R)	172	6.6 ppg	1.8 rpg	0.4 apg	73.3 FG%	40.0 3FG%
F	Nene Hilario (r)	186	13.2 ppg	10.1 rpg	1.7 apg	1.73 bpg	66.7 FG%
F	Rodney White	207	3.5 ppg	1.1 rpg	0.8 apg	0.56 spg	35.0 FG%
G	Predrag Savovic (R†)	236	20.3 ppg	4.8 rpg	2.3 apg	43.8 FG%	39.1 3FG%
C	Mark Blount	286	2.1 ppg	1.9 rpg	0.43 bpg	42.1 FG%	81.1 FT%

New acquisition

(R) Rookie (statistics from Italian League)
(r) Rookie (statistics from Brazilian League)
(R†) Rookie (statistics for final college season)

*PVR: Player Value Ranking (explanation on page 92)

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Inside

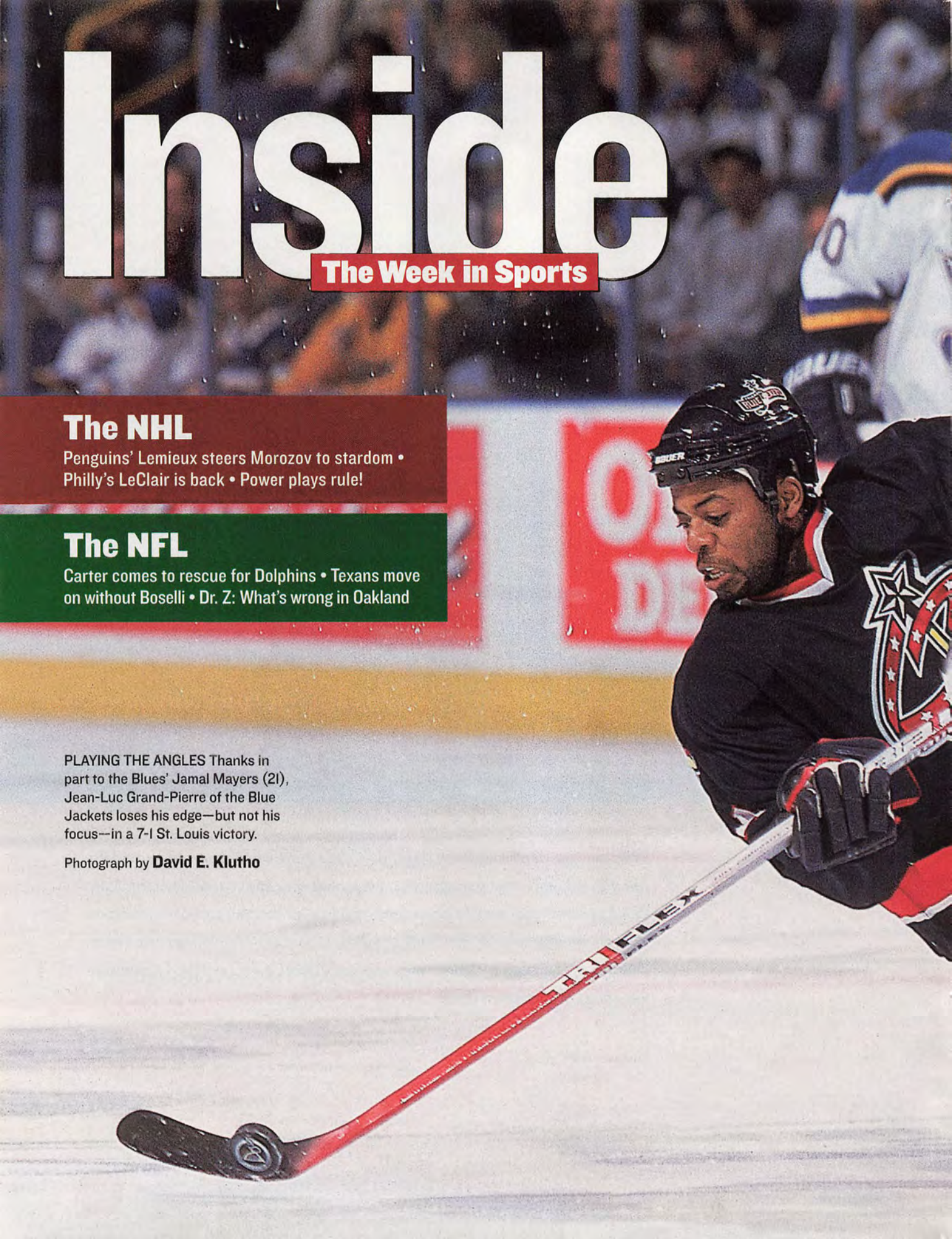
The Week in Sports

The NHL

Penguins' Lemieux steers Morozov to stardom • Philly's LeClair is back • Power plays rule!

The NFL

Carter comes to rescue for Dolphins • Texans move on without Boselli • Dr. Z: What's wrong in Oakland



PLAYING THE ANGLES Thanks in part to the Blues' Jamal Mayers (21), Jean-Luc Grand-Pierre of the Blue Jackets loses his edge—but not his focus—in a 7-1 St. Louis victory.

Photograph by **David E. Klutho**

21
EASTON
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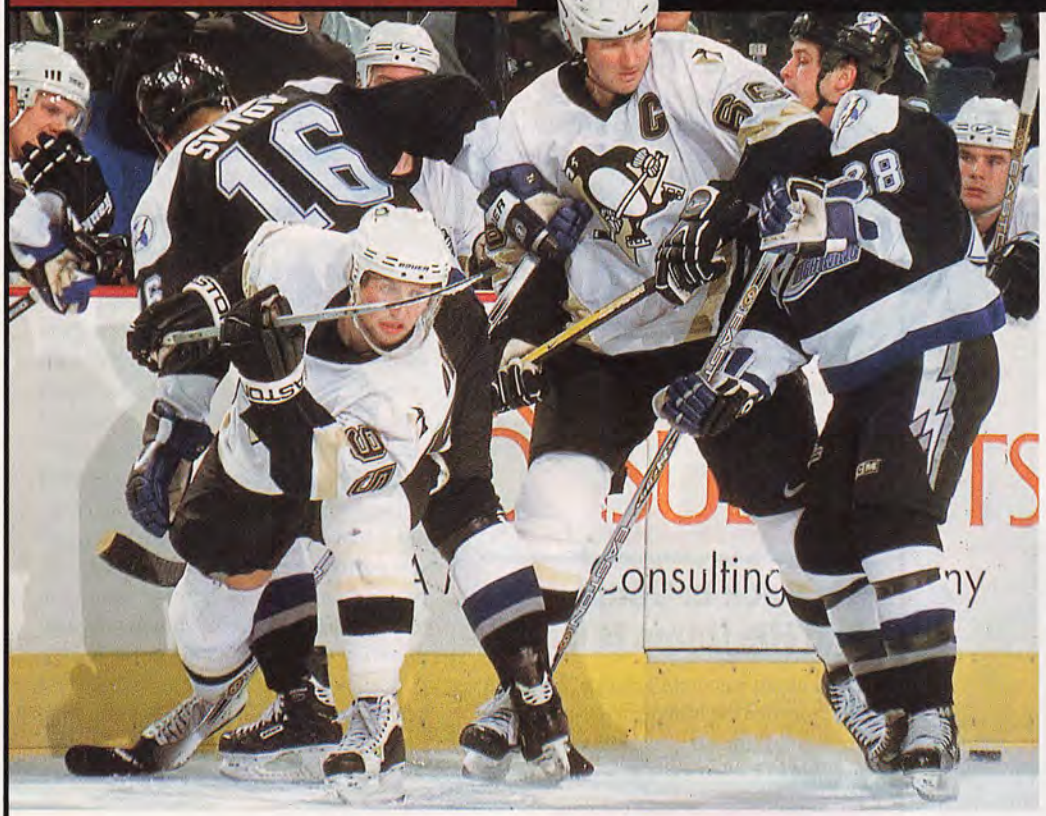
At what point do national security

and common sense collide?

Join the conversation.

Inside The NHL



With Lemieux (66) as his center, Morozov (95) had 10 points in his first five games.

In Mario He Trusts

Playing on the top line with Mario Lemieux has brought out the best in Pittsburgh's talented Aleksey Morozov

by Daniel G. Habib

SKATING ALONGSIDE Mario Lemieux has made Penguins winger Aleksey Morozov look like a superstar, but there was a time when playing with Lemieux put knots in his stomach. "I was so nervous my first game, wondering how I was going to play with him," Morozov, 25, says of his debut on Lemieux's line last January. "It's tough mentally, but Mario gives me confidence. He tells me not to look for him all the time, just to play my game. He doesn't scream at me; he tries to help. And he always puts the puck right on my stick."

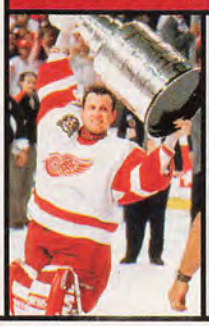
That's the biggest perk in having Lemieux for a linemate. Morozov, who's been stationed on Lemieux's right wing since the season opened, had five goals (second most in the league) and five assists for the surprising Penguins (3-1-1-0 at week's end). "This is my best time in the NHL," he says.

A Moscow native, Morozov was the Russian league's rookie of the year in 1995 when Pittsburgh made him its first-round selection (24th overall) in the NHL draft. He was twice named to the all-tournament team at the World Junior Championships, and he scored 13 goals and 13 assists in 76 games as an NHL rookie in '97–98. But with talented right wingers Jaromir Jagr and Alexei Kovalev ahead of him, Morozov languished in a third-line checking role. "I wasn't happy," Morozov says. "Playing 10 minutes a game, flipping the puck all the time from the red line, that's not my game."

After three mediocre years in which he scored a total of 26 goals, Morozov was given a top-line spot alongside Lemieux in the middle of last season. (Jagr was traded to the Capitals in July 2001, and Kovalev has frequently changed forward positions.) Morozov, who has soft hands and an accurate shot, enjoyed the most productive stretch of his career, scoring nine times in eight games before Lemieux was sidelined for the year with a hip injury. Morozov finished the season with career highs in goals (20) and points (49). Playing with Lemieux and Kovalev this year, Morozov has picked up where he left off. "He's got more space to operate," says coach Rick Kehoe, "and playing with Mario, he understands that he could get the puck anytime, anywhere, so he has to be ready. It makes him sharper."

With more precision than boom to his shot, Morozov is most dangerous from inside the dots and, at Lemieux's urging, has made a habit of going to the

Hall of Famer? Not a Hall of Famer?



G Mike Vernon *1982–83 through 2001–02*
He never won a Vezina Trophy, nor was he ever a first-team All-Star, but his 385 NHL wins rank seventh alltime, and he was the netminder for two Stanley Cup winners (the 1988–89 Flames and '96–97 Red Wings).

THE VOTE: *His playoff achievements, which include winning the Conn Smythe Trophy, put him over the top and into the Hall.*

LOU CAPOZZOLA (TOP); DAVID E. KLUTHO

net. (All five of his goals came from in close.) At 6' 1" and 204 pounds, he's also bulked up over the years (he weighed 174 when drafted), which has improved his strength in the corners and around the cage. "He's finally realized what to do with the puck," Kovalev says. "He takes it to the net, or he goes in for rebounds. He's found that touch."

He's also become more patient with the puck. During Pittsburgh's 3–2 victory over Atlanta on Oct. 16, Morozov took a Lemieux feed in the right face-off circle and waited for Thrashers goaltender Milan Hnilicka to cover the near post before switching to his backhand and shoveling the puck through the five-hole for the Penguins' first goal. "Mario has given me a good push," Morozov says. "I feel very good now, so even if I play without those two guys, I still feel confident."

John LeClair's Strong Start

His Back Is Game, And His Game Is Back

Asked about linemate John LeClair after the Flyers tied the Islanders 3–3 last Thursday night, right wing Mark Recchi smiled and said, "He looks great, healthy and strong. He's got strength back in his legs and his back, and he's so good one-on-one. It's like the old John."

It's been two years since the 6' 3", 225-pound LeClair has played like this, pinballing off defenders on the forecheck and camping in front of the net to create havoc and score on easy tap-ins. A series of back injuries limited him to 16 games during 2000–01, and last season he scored only 25 goals in 82 games. But after getting his league-high seventh goal in Philadelphia's 3–1 win over the Capitals last Saturday night, LeClair has regained the dominant form that he showed as a three-time 50-goal scorer in the mid-'90s. As a result, the Flyers were off to a 3-0-2-0 start and were one of two unbeaten clubs, with the Lightning.

LeClair's renaissance began in July, after minor surgery to remove scar tissue in his lower back revealed a herniated disk, which was partially removed. The disk had been pinching a nerve, causing weakness in LeClair's legs. A diligent summer of rehabilitation strengthened his lower body, a critical element in his game. "I can move better," says the 33-year-old LeClair, "and I'm more pain-free."

in the Crease

by Pierre McGuire

IN OVERTIME against the Panthers on Oct. 12, Thrashers second-year sensation **Ilya Kovalchuk** was penalized for using an illegal stick, an infraction that led to Florida's game-winning goal by **Olli Jokinen**. After last season, during which the 19-year-old Kovalchuk was also called for an illegal stick, Atlanta's management notified his stickmaker, Easton, that it would not pay for any stick that was delivered with an illegal curve. Kovalchuk circumvented the Thrashers by having a friend buy sticks from the company. Atlanta has since fined him $500. . . . Don't hesitate to attend a Wild game this year. The reason? The most trapping team in hockey has discarded its constipating system for a freewheeling, high-speed style that is pleasing to watch. The change enabled lightning-quick 2002 first-round draft choice **Pierre-Marc Bouchard**, who is only 5' 9" and 155 pounds, to make the team. . . . The Sharks are off to a slow start (1-3-0-0 through Sunday), and many of the team's veterans are fretting over the contract stalemate that's keeping No. 1 goalie **Evgeni Nabokov** on the sidelines. The players feel that to advance as far as the conference finals in the ultracompetitive West, San Jose would need home ice advantage in the first two rounds of the playoffs, a possibility that gets less likely with each day Nabokov remains out. . . . Credit underrated defenseman **Calle Johansson** with helping the Capitals (3-2-0-0) break out of the gate well. Johansson, who missed all but 11 games last season with a shoulder injury, is the glue for Washington's back line. With Johansson eligible to become an unrestricted free agent at season's end, expect G.M. **George McPhee** to sign him to an extension before long. . . . After three fine seasons with St. Cloud State, Blackhawks center **Tyler Arnason** showed up at Chicago's rookie camp in August 2001 weighing 225 pounds, way too heavy for his 5' 11" frame. He spent most of '01–02 with the Blackhawks' AHL affiliate in Norfolk, trimming down and becoming the league's rookie of the year. (He also played 21 games with Chicago, scoring four points.) In September he reported to camp at 196 pounds and has earned a regular spot in Chicago's lineup.

Whom Would You Rather Have?

Kyle McLaren BRUINS D	Brad Stuart SHARKS D
The 6′ 4″ 230-pounder, who is sitting out after declining Boston's $1.8 million qualifying offer, is a career .30 points-per-game scorer. The 1995 first-round draftee missed 79 games over the last three seasons and had a −13 rating in that time.	The 6′ 2″ 215-pounder, who is sitting out after declining San Jose's $1.1 million qualifying offer, is a career .37 points-per-game scorer. The 1998 first-round draftee missed five games over the last three seasons and had a +26 rating in that time.

THE VERDICT: McLaren bangs with the best, but he's brittle. We'll take the durable Stuart, who has more offensive upside. —D.G.H.

In the meantime LeClair, Recchi and playmaking center Jeremy Roenick have been a pain for opponents. Put on the same line against the Flames on Oct. 12, they sparked a three-goal, third-period comeback as Philly won 5–4. Since then 10 of the team's 15 goals through Sunday had come with all three on the ice. Says coach Ken Hitchcock, "That line is dangerous, especially when they're all working as hard as they're working now. They're not playing just a skill game, they're playing a hardworking game."

Effects of Rules Changes

Power Play Is More Powerful

Primarily because the NHL was making good on its off-season pledge to call all obstruction fouls, teams were averaging a combined 37.4 penalty minutes and 12.3 power plays per game after the first two weeks of the season—a dramatic increase over last season's numbers, 30.4 and 8.3. Also, the number of power-play goals per game was 2.13, up from 1.30 in 2001–02. (Not surprisingly, there were only five shutouts through the league's first 76 games, compared with nine a year ago.)

Says Chris Chelios, whose Red Wings led the league in power-play conversion rate (30.0%), "We're going to win and lose games on our special teams."

While players adjust to the new officiating standards, teams are taking measures to beef up their special teams. Last season the Coyotes converted only 15.6% of their power plays, and in anticipation of the effects of the crackdown, they hired as a consultant future Hall of Famer Paul Coffey, who quarterbacked some of the league's most prolific man-up units. The increase in power plays is forcing clubs to use more players on their penalty-killing units to avoid burnout and so they won't have regulars stuck on the bench for long stretches.

"I think more teams now have almost three units of penalty killers and try to keep them fresh," says Canadiens assistant coach Guy Charron. "The challenge is to involve more people on the special teams and to get some consistency."

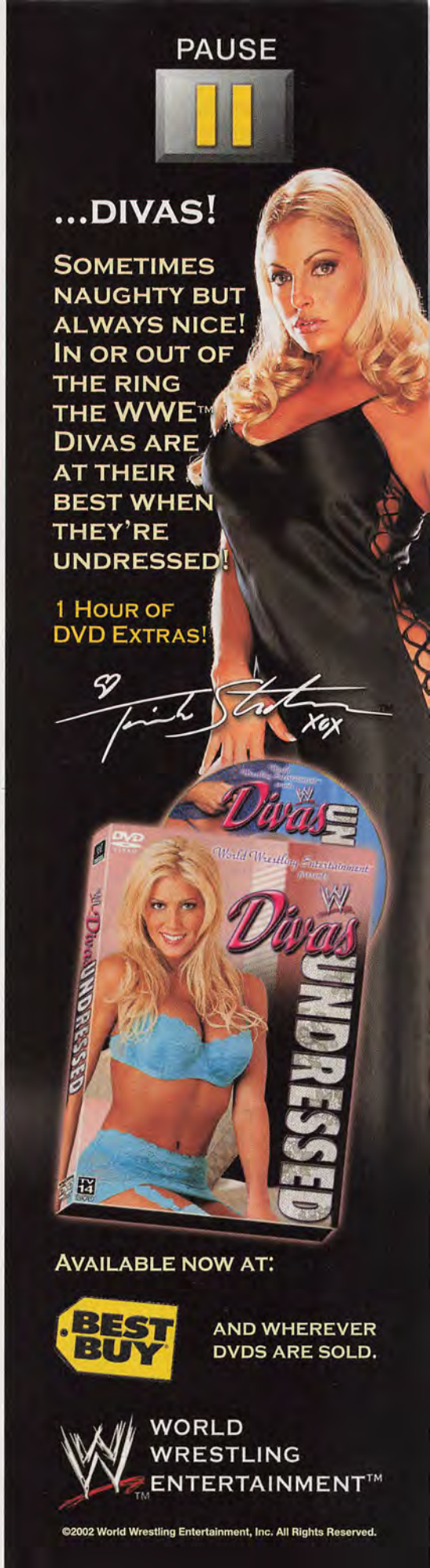
Shorter Games

Time Is Money for the NHL's TV Future

Calling more obstruction penalties and instituting the hurry-up face-off rule not only has increased scoring, but it has also noticeably shortened game times. The season's first 76 matches lasted an average of 2 hours, 21 minutes, compared with 2:37 through the same point last year. On Oct. 15 the Oilers and the Stars, two of the NHL's better skating clubs, completed their match in 2:05, at one point going nine minutes without a whistle. What's more, pulling the average game time under 2½ hours significantly enhances the game's TV appeal, and with the ABC-ESPN national broadcast package expiring after the 2003–04 season, the league's timing couldn't be better. □

For more news and notes from Daniel G. Habib, go to **cnnsi.com/hockey**.

LOU CAPOZZOLA (LEFT); DAVID E. KLUTHO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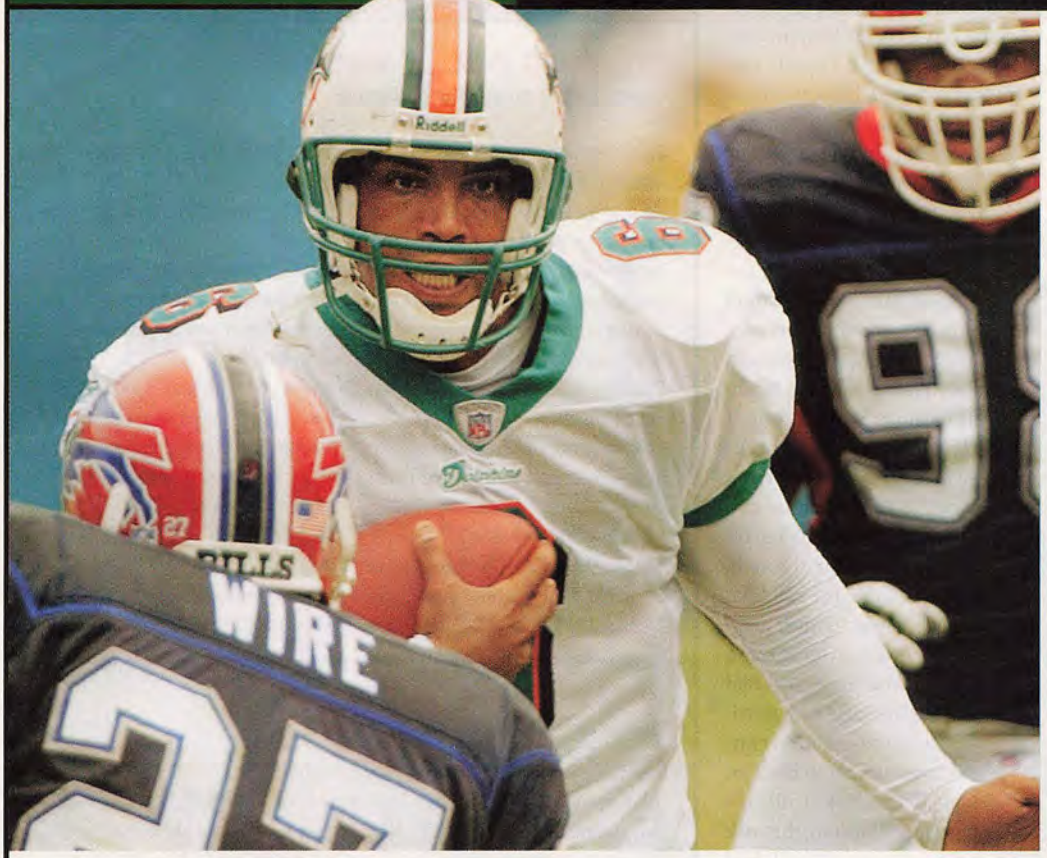
Inside The NFL



Lucas, intercepted four times in a 23–10 loss, will get some help from Carter (below).

Welcome Back

Wideout Cris Carter is coming out of retirement—and not a moment too soon for the injury-depleted Dolphins

by Peter King

THE DOLPHINS were 28 minutes and three turnovers into their meltdown at Pro Player Stadium on Sunday when, 35 miles to the north, in Boca Raton, an interested observer snarled at the big-screen TV in his family room. "Come on, Ray!" Cris Carter said, urging on Miami quarterback Ray Lucas. "Take a sack! We've got a beast of a defense! Let them win it!"

Maybe Carter, second in the NFL in career receptions, should have come out of retirement a day earlier. On Monday, in the wake of their 23–10 loss to Buffalo, the Dolphins signed the 36-year-old Carter to a contract that could pay him around $1 million for the last 10 weeks of 2002. After that, Carter is expected to return to his analyst's job on HBO's *Inside the NFL*, though he sounds like a man who hopes his close-to-home gig is more than a half-season deal. "Stay tuned," he said on Sunday.

Retirement, as it turned out, was too sedate for Carter. The

HBO assignment was fun and a way to keep his hand in football, but it didn't satisfy his route-running jones. He got the I-should-be-out-there feeling when he took his son Duron to the Jets-Dolphins game on Sept. 22. And he didn't need much convincing when Miami called on Oct. 16 to feel him out about playing again. The Dolphins may have been sitting atop the AFC East at 5–1 after a last-second win over the Broncos on Oct. 13, but they were hurting at wideout with starters Chris Chambers (concussion) and Oronde Gadsden (torn ligament in his left wrist) out for a week and the season, respectively, and with no depth to speak of.

Last Thursday in New York City, before taping the HBO show, Carter was wrestling with whether he should accept the Miami offer. His *Inside the NFL* colleagues were unanimous. "Bro," Dan Marino told him that morning, "do you have any idea how much I'd love to come back? You've got to do it." When Carter's family got on board on Friday, the decision was easy. After passing a team physical on Monday, Carter began preparing for his new job in earnest. He should play a prominent role in Miami's next game, on Nov. 4 in Green Bay.

"After you retire, you're always trying to justify not wanting to play," Carter said on Sunday during a timeout that momentarily halted the Dolphins' six-turnover implosion. "You say you've got to get on with your life. You almost believe it. All of us who go into the next life knowing we've got something left still want to play, in the back of our mind."

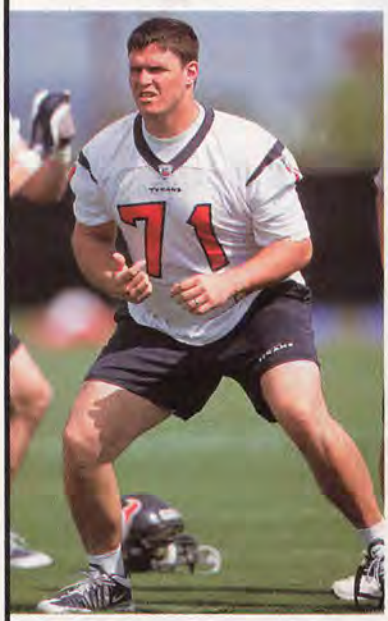
The deal with Miami is salve on the wound left by his departure from the NFL. After persuading the Vikings to grant him his release last winter, Carter was on the verge of signing with the Rams in March. But they backed out when Carter delayed a trip to

RHONA WISE/AFP (TOP); ELSA/GETTY IMAGES

St. Louis because he was also negotiating with the Browns. At the same time, he was talking to the Dolphins, but he wanted more than the roughly $1.5 million the team was offering.

Second only to Jerry Rice on the alltime receptions list, with 1,093, Carter hopes to contribute immediately by serving as a safety net for the inexperienced Lucas. The 30-year-old quarterback, who on Sunday made his first start since 1999, will be in the lineup for at least a month while starter Jay Fiedler recovers from a broken right thumb. "I watch tape from last year," Carter said on Sunday, "and there's nothing I won't be able to do now that I did then."

The Dolphins are counting on that.



JOHN BIEVER

Boselli will have to wait until 2003 to play his first down for the Texans.

Tony Boselli's Nightmare

Texans Left Holding the Bag

Managing the salary cap is never easy. Just ask Jaguars coach Tom Coughlin, who last February had to sever ties with the first draft pick in franchise history, popular left tackle Tony Boselli, to get the team under the cap. In so doing he alienated not only the fans who had become attached to Boselli, but also his wife, Judy, who'd become very close to Tony and his wife, Angi. "When I finally told Judy, she started throwing things at me," Coughlin recalls. "She got mad. She said, 'You are the biggest jerk in the world!' "

In a football sense, however, Coughlin made a prescient move. A deal was struck with the Texans: Jacksonville would expose three stalwarts (defensive tackles Seth Payne and Gary Walker as well as Boselli) in the expansion draft if Houston would agree to take all of them—and their combined $16.9 million cap value—off the Jaguars' hands. The Texans came through, clearly valuing the solid defensive players for their long-term impact even though Boselli, who since 1999 had torn the labrum in each shoulder and undergone reconstructive surgery on his right knee, was a risk. Unfortunately for Houston, that risk became reality: Boselli had to have additional surgery on his left shoulder in June, never took the field for the Texans and last week was placed on injured reserve, lost for the year.

"If you'd have asked me last January, 'Will Tony Boselli need additional shoulder surgery?' I'd have bet the house he wouldn't have," says Houston general manager Charley Casserly.

Boselli, who had a second operation on the left shoulder in late April, says that Jacksonville doctors told him in the off-season that he would be "as good as new" by training camp. Instead, an impingement that wouldn't go away with rehab necessitated a third operation on the shoulder, and there wasn't time to get it strong enough to withstand NFL play. Coughlin insisted last week that the Jaguars were open with Boselli and the Texans about the shoulder (doctors representing Houston and the NFL also checked out

King's Corner

TRADING E-MAIL WITH . . .

Cowboys left tackle Flozell Adams

SI: Your toughest opponent?
Adams: Hugh Douglas of Philadelphia. He's a speed rusher, and most of those guys go straight upfield. But Hugh is always jumping all over the place and moving around like a point guard. You can't prepare for any one thing.
SI: Best gift you've gotten from Emmitt Smith?
Adams: He gave all the linemen an expensive bottle of wine and fancy goblets.
SI: Your best block ever?
Adams: On a play this year against St. Louis, I hit the linebacker, and he flew in the air and landed on his back. Emmitt went for about 20 yards.
SI: Most annoying thing fans say to you?
Adams: "Man, you're big." Like I don't get up in the morning, brush my teeth and look in the mirror and realize that.
SI: You've got one week left on Earth. What would you want to do?
Adams: Buy the fastest car in the world and see if I can burn the engine up driving as fast as I can.
SI: NFL coach you'd most like to play for?
Adams: None. . . . I guess someone who runs the ball a lot.

MATCHUP OF THE WEEK

Giants versus Eagles

Since November 1988 the Giants and the Eagles have met 28 times. Each team has won 14; each has scored 521 points. "If you're a Giant, there is no experience in the NFL like walking out of the tunnel at the Vet and listening to the fans get on you for three solid hours," says former New York coach Bill Parcells. "Those people invent new ways to abuse you every single year."

THE LIST

Among the 27 franchises that have played continuously since 1991—the year that Mike Brown took full control of the Bengals' football decision making—Cincinnati is the only team that has not made the playoffs and has not had a winning season. Here are the teams with the worst winning percentages since the start of the '91 season.

Team	Record	Winning seasons	Winning pct.
1. Bengals	53–129	0	.291
2. Cardinals	67–115	1	.368
3. Seahawks	77–105	2	.423
4. Rams	79–104	3	.432
Colts	79–103	5	.434

MY TWO CENTS

1. Niners wideout Terrell Owens may have considered his ball-signing antics harmless, but after showing up Seahawks cornerback Shawn Springs, he'll have a bull's-eye on his chest in the Dec. 1 rematch with Seattle. "If it was me, I would have gotten a fine, because I would've been fighting," says Seahawks corner Willie Williams. "If I get my shot [in the next meeting], I'm taking it."
2. I'll bet you a bowl of gumbo that LSU's Nick Saban coaches in the NFL next year. My best bets: Lions, Giants, Falcons.

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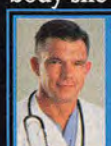

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the tackle), but Boselli says, "I'm disappointed I was told one thing and something else happened."

The three-player dump by Jacksonville could also wind up affecting the balance of power in the new AFC South. The Jaguars, who were $24 million over the cap during the off-season, are scheduled to be $12 million under it after this year; it remains to be seen whether Houston will get its money's worth out of the three players. "We thought about those implications," Casserly says. "We had to do what we could to make our team better. Jacksonville had a big problem, but Tom Coughlin would have found some way to keep winning."

Perhaps, but he got a huge assist from the Texans.

Dispatches

Lousy Footing In Oakland

Sebastian Janikowski is killing the Raiders. The man with the lethal left leg missed field goals of 27 and 48 yards in regulation of a 27–21 OT loss to San Diego and has made only 7 of 11 tries this year. What's worse, with an early November court date looming for a DUI charge, Janikowski could face disciplinary action from the league. . . . New defensive coordinator Mike Nolan's strategy has been a big factor in Baltimore's recent 3–1 run. He's more blitz-happy than predecessor Marvin Lewis was, which pleases all the young pups on the Ravens' defense. . . . Boss Bailey, a 6' 3", 231-pound senior linebacker at Georgia, might be a top 10 pick, just as his brother Champ, an All-America corner for the Dawgs, was in '99 when Washington took him seventh. "Likes the game more than Champ, and he's a better competitor," reads one team's scouting report on Boss. □

Read Peter King's Monday Morning Quarterback every week at **cnnsi.com/football**.

Dr. Z's Forecast

AL DAVIS USED TO HATE TEAMS LIKE the 2002 Raiders. The Oakland boss once walked into an offensive meeting just in time to hear his coach say, "We're going to take what they give us."

Davis interrupted the session. "Don't ever let me hear you say that again," he said. "We don't take what they give us. We make them take what we give *them*."

What Davis gave them in the old days was Raider Football. The deep strike, the thrust into the heart. Cliff Branch, Warren Wells, remember them? Wells never averaged less than 21.5 yards a catch in each of his four years with Oakland, and one year the number was 26.8. The Raiders softened up the enemy with power running—big, hard-smacking bangers like Clemon Daniels, Mark Van Eeghen and Hewritt (Hewie the Freight) Dixon, a one-man train wreck. On defense Oakland collapsed the pocket, crumbling the quarterback under unbearable pressure that was backed up by corners tough enough to play bump-and-run.

PAUL SAKUMA/AP

The Chiefs will have to contain Porter, Oakland's one fleet wideout.

Now the Raiders' passing game is diddly-dink, their running game is becoming a memory. When the mood seizes them, Oakland defenders will go after the passer with extreme pressure. They did that to the Chargers' Drew Brees on Sunday, but not until they had been awakened by a 79-yard drive that opened the second half and gave San Diego a two-touchdown lead. Worst of all, on that drive the Raiders played a soft zone and didn't blitz. The old Davis would not have liked what he saw on Sunday.

O.K., the all-throw, no-run approach did get Oakland back into the game and forced the overtime, but the Raiders still lost their second straight. People are saying that they ran up their 4–0 record against softies and that teams that smash them in the mouth will beat them. Jerry Rice and Tim Brown are crafty guys, but the only speed in the wideout corps belongs to Jerry Porter, which is why Oakland is in a three-wide set most of the time. Defenses can sit on Rice and Brown and defy Rich Gannon to go deep.

Which brings us to Kansas City on Sunday. The Chiefs have a potent offense (an NFL-high 239 points scored). So does every team that faces their defense (a league-high 230 points allowed). In its last two games K.C. blew 10- and 14-point fourth-quarter leads. The Chiefs' problems run deeper than Oakland's. **The Raiders win it,** but their defense had better be ready.

►There's no logical reason to pick Seattle over Dallas as my upset special. I mean, what better time for Emmitt Smith to get the yards he needs to pass Walter Payton than at home against the NFL's worst rushing defense? But I get a feeling that **the Seahawks will rise to the challenge** and turn in one of their best outings of the season.

►The Jets have figured out a way to get their much maligned linebackers making plays again. Their young quarterback, Chad Pennington, is piling up lots of yards. **So let's give the Jets their second win in a row,** over the Browns.

►After that slugfest against the Bucs, the Eagles are due for a letdown, but it won't happen on Monday night against a division rival that always plays them tough. **Philly** will beat the Giants. New England has had two weeks to patch the leaky ship. I'll go with the hunch and give the **Patriots** the win over Denver. The **Bears** will take a close one at Minnesota. The **Steelers** like to play in Baltimore. They've won their last five there. This will be number 6.

►Tampa Bay faces Carolina in a battle of ailing quarterbacks. The **Bucs** take a low-scoring affair. The Colts haven't won in Washington since 1967; they were flying the Baltimore banner in those days, and this was a neighborhood showdown. Everything has changed, of course, but I still like the **Redskins** at home. —*Paul Zimmerman*

Check out Dr. Z's Inside Football every week during the season at **cnnsi.com/football**.

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1 Az Arizona Wildcats 2001*							2 Ks Kansas Jayhawks 2000*
3 Ok Oklahoma Sooners 2002	4 Tx Texas Longhorns 1997 • 2002				6 Dk Duke Blue Devils 1999	7 Ga Georgia Bulldogs 1997 • 2002	8 Ky Kentucky Wildcats 2000
10 Uc UCLA Bruins 2000					13 Al Alabama Crimson Tide 2002		16 Vi Villanova Wildcats 2002	17 Fl Florida Gators 2001
18 Ct [illegible] 1999	19 Mq Marquette Golden Eagles 2002		22 Md Maryland Terrapins 2001	26 Sy Syracuse Orangemen 2002		30 Ill Illinois Fighting Illini 1998	32 Ns NC State Wolfpack 1997	37 Sn St. John's Red Storm 2000
41 Tu Tulsa Golden Hurricane 1996		47 Gt Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets 1996	48 Me Memphis Tigers 2002		53 Wf Wake Forest Demon Deacons 1998	56 Ge Georgetown Hoyas 1998	62 St Stanford Cardinal 1999*	70 Ia Iowa Hawkeyes 1999
	73 Sj St. Joseph's Hawks 1996	76 Pr Princeton Tigers 1997*			80 Tm Temple Owls 1996 • 1998* • 2001			

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YEARS OF PARTICIPATION – the "atomic weight" ... only the nation's top teams get to tip-off each season at Madison Square Garden on ESPN ... asterisk (*) indicates champion

4
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Fan Power

by Rick Reilly

THERE'S A Bill of Rights for U.S. citizens, children, taxpayers, consumers, home owners, travelers, mental patients and animals. Which leaves only one important group without one: sports fans.

Until now.

Amendment I Owners shall make no seat in a stadium narrower than John Madden's butt; nor name said stadium after some soulless brokerage house; nor install trough-style urinals in said stadium without little shelves to set cold beers upon.

Amendment II A good seat being necessary to the pursuit of happiness, any fan may move down to a better one after halftime, including courtside, and not get the hook from a 17-year-old, $5.15-an-hour-making, Clearasil-jonesing usher who thinks a spiffy jacket suddenly makes him a member of the Marines Security Guard.

Amendment III No fan shall suffer strikes, lockouts, seat licensing fees, male cheerleaders, ticket-price hikes after losing seasons, drastic last-minute changes in starting times to accommodate ESPN3, team-logo changes within one year after said fan has plunked down $75 for a jersey with the *old* logo, mascot arrests, vendors handing over lukewarm beers with thumbs in them, 6' 10" yokels wearing novelty cowboy hats in the seat in front of said fan, drunk carnies constantly screaming "Run the flea-flicker!" in said fan's ear, or ejection from the arena or stadium by a security guard because of said fan's T-shirt, even if it says POHLAD DATES FARM ANIMALS.

Amendment IV The right of the fan to a short national anthem shall not be violated; nor shall the anthem be "personalized" to hell and back; nor shall said singer be the owner's niece; nor shall the guy in the music booth continue to play *Na Na Hey Hey Kiss Him Goodbye* or *We Will Rock You* year after year after year.

Amendment V No fan shall be required to answer questions from spouses, such as why the garbage disposal is still stopped up, during crucial situations, such as the second half; nor shall said spouse interrupt at such times to get a pickle jar opened or to "mention" a "little, teeny-weeny nothing accident" with the new Mustang knowing full well that said fan is only pretending to listen in such crucial situations, such as *SportsCenter*.

Amendment VI The fan shall be afforded a fair and speedy baseball game and not suffer through human glaciers like Nomar Garciaparra stepping out of the batter's box to readjust his hat, sleeves, gloves, groin and stirrups after every pitch; nor shall the fan suffer TV camera closeups so tight that said fan can see the piece of spinach on a pitcher's tooth, all the while leaving said fan no idea that the infield has shifted and the first base coach is on fire.

Amendment VII In lawsuits it shall be judged that any ball, bat or muffler that ends up in the seats shall be permanently the property of the fan who first comes into possession of it, not the meathead who wrestles it away. In case of said wrestling away, said meathead will be subdued, stripped, wrapped in the Iraqi flag and dropped off at the nearest Harley bar.

Amendment VIII There shall be no such thing as a traffic lane between the TV and the fan watching the game. Use the off-ramp behind the sofa. In addition chips, wings and cold beer shall be readily available to said fan, though rising to get said items shall not constitute an offer by said fan to get same for lard-ass brothers-in-law in close proximity.

No fan shall suffer strikes, seat licensing fees, male cheerleaders or ticket-price hikes after losing seasons.

Amendment IX No fan shall be made to feel like a jerk just for wanting to shake the hand of an athlete said fan has spent all his time and money idolizing, just because said athlete happens to be 7' 1" and 325 pounds with footwork Baryshnikov would've guzzled turpentine for.

Amendment X The fan shall not suffer parking places that are $4 cab rides to the arena door; nor shall the cost of four tickets, four hot dogs, four sodas, four programs and four souvenir hats to any game exceed that of a 2003 Ford Focus; nor shall old phone books, sliced diagonally, slathered in picante sauce and topped with green goo, be sold as a $9.95 Fiesta Mexicana; nor shall the beer be anything but very, very cold.

It would also be nice if somebody explained the Davis Cup to the fan, preferably Anna Kournikova.

These powers delegated to the fan shall not be construed to mean that said fan can streak, holler "You da Man!", participate in Father-Son Night pummelings, ask for autographs if over the age of 12, or wear those hideous striped Zubaz pants.

Ever. □

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